

S E R M O N S

UPON

SEVERAL SUBJECTS,

Preached in the

CATHEDRAL CHURCH of St. PETER

IN

E X E T E R.

In Two VOLUMES.

By JOHN WARREN, D. D. late Prebendary of
St. Peter's, Exeter, and formerly Fellow of
QUEEN'S COLLEGE in CAMBRIDGE.

VOL. I.

To which is prefixed an Account of the AUTHOR.



L O N D O N;

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T H E
P R E F A C E:

Giving some Account of the

A U T H O R.

DR. *John Warren* was born at *Preston* in *Sussex* September 4. and baptized September 5. 1670. His Father, *Mr. Samuel Warren*, removed from thence with his family, in the year 1673. to *Ashford* in *Kent*, to the *Vicarage* whereof he was in the same year instituted and inducted, upon the presentation of the *Dean and Chapter* of *Rocheſter*, through the recommendation of the
A then

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then worthy DEAN Dr. Thomas Lamp-

He held this living to the day of his death, March 16. 1720. and performed the great duty of it with diligence and chearfulness, being very laborious in a plain and instructive manner of preaching, and shewing himself an example to his whole Parish of prudence, gentleness, and piety.

He held also by Sequestration, through the favour of four successive Archbishops of Canterbury, a small Rectory in the neighbourhood which was in fact a *Sinecure*, there being neither church nor inhabitant in the parish, and which was therefore a very suitable Appendix to a living, where the duty was great and difficult, and the profits far from bearing a just proportion thereto.

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IN the Free School of *Asbford* our *Author* had his education in *Grammar-Learning*, and he passed through the school with a good reputation for his diligence and ingenuity, and hopes were early entertained of his future *usefulness* in the world.

I MUST here desire the *Reader's* indulgence whilst I add a word or two, for a reason that shall presently be mentioned, concerning this *School* and its *Founder*.

It is a very handsome building, and was erected and endowed with a salary of 30 *l. per annum*, by the bounty and generosity of the pious and learned SIR NORTON KNATCHBULL, *Knight and Baronet*, in the reign of K. CHARLES *the First*, about the year 1636. The same Gentleman who distinguished himself so much by his

incomparable *Annotations upon some difficult texts in all the books of the New Testament*; from which *Divines*, and others capable of making a judgment upon the *critical* performances of the learned, have received good light, towards attaining to the true sense of divers obscure *passages* in the *original*.

A WORK that would have reflected Honour upon the most eminent among those whose *Profession* it is to study the *Holy Scriptures*, and from whose lips the people are to receive knowledge.

FOR, (as the publisher of the *English Edition*, in the year 1692, has * *J. L.* well observed) * in this excellent and judicious work “The most
“ *proper* sense and *right* use of each
“ ambiguous particle, word, and
“ phrase, and likewise the *genuine*
“ con-

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“ construction of all those *intricate*
“ periods, *obscure* transitions and
“ *perplexing* trajections, which occur
“ frequently in those SACRED WRITERS,
“ are vindicated and cleared by a
“ more *plain* and accurate *Version*,
“ or a more *intelligible* and commo-
“ dious *Exposition* of them.”

BUT he was moreover (and which
is the best *grace* and ornament of a
Christian, in whatever situation
placed) full as eminent for his *Piety*
and *Religion*, as for his *Birth* and
Learning; whereby he shewed that
it was not mere *Curiosity*, but a Love
of God and his *Duty*, and a just
Honour and Veneration for the SACRED
ORACLES, that disposed him to such
an unwearied Application to the
Study of them.

I COULD not well avoid making
this short *Digression* from the pur-

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pose of this *Preface*, it being no other than a just expression of *Gratitude* to the memory of a person, by whose pious liberality the *Author* and four of his brothers had the opportunity of a very convenient Education in *Grammar-Learning*.

From this school the *Author* went to *Cambridge*, and was admitted a *Scholar* of *Queen's College* in the year 1686, before he was completely sixteen years of age.

In this place he made a due use of the happy opportunity that was put into his hands, of laying a foundation in *that learning*, which is of absolute necessity to every one, who would make any figure in the learned world, or even attain to the capacity of being to any degree *useful* in any of the *learned Professions*.

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OR this he was very sensible, and therefore applied himself with diligence to the study of the *Philosophy* then in repute, and laid his foundation in the study of *Geometry* and *Logic*. He had a head very well formed for *metaphysical* speculations, in which he was wont to busy himself pretty much; by which in a while he came to *excel* in that kind of knowledge, and accordingly to be taken notice of for his *accuracy* and *acuteness* in reasoning, and for his *laudable* manner of performing all publick exercises and disputations.

AND doubtless the pains he then took to improve himself in what is properly called *Academical* Learning, was of *singular* use to him ever after, and was *one* cause of that *clearness* of *Conception* and *Expression* which he ever shewed, as well upon any de-

bate in conversation, as in his compositions for the *Pulpit*.

FOR, I will take the liberty to observe, that a neglect of these studies in the time of youth, and especially an avowed contempt of them as more *abstruse* than *profitable*, has been the occasion of much *Perplexity* in the reasonings of many men, and of an utter *Incapacity* in them of clearly detecting the *Fallacies* and *Sophistry* that sometimes run through the performances of *Writers* of no mean account in the world.

HE was admitted to the degree of *Bachelor of Arts* in January 1689, with a reputation which was the deserved consequence of a diligent application to the study of those *Arts* and *Sciences*, a due proficiency wherein the *Statutes* of the *University* require, as a qualification in ALL
4 who

who would be admitted to that first Degree.

AND in a just regard to the *University* wherein I had the Honour, for many years, of being intrusted with the Education of young *Gentlemen*, I think myself bound to add, that there is always a very strict and full Examination made into the Abilities of every *Candidate* for this *Degree*, by persons of approved Learning and Capacity, and that, if it sometimes happens, that a *Scholar* may obtain this *first Degree*, rather in hopes of his *future Diligence* than as a deserved reward for what is *past* (which, I believe, is not often the case) yet that there is however all possible Care taken to sift and discover every *Candidate's* true Qualifications, and that, they who *excel* are sure to meet with due *Encomiums*,
and

and to have their Excellencies notified, even by a *publick Testimony* of them before the whole *University*. But I return.

ABOUT two years after the *Author's* commencing *Bachelor of Arts*, and when there were but small hopes of his succeeding to a *Fellowship* in his *College*, he accepted an offer that was made him of being *Tutor* to the Sons of *Sir William Twisden* Baronet, of *East Peckham* in *Kent*.

What chiefly induced him to close with the offer at that time, was, that he was just then fallen from his Hopes of being promoted by the favour of the good *Archbishop of York*, *Dr. Lamplugh*, his *Father's* Patron and constant Friend. Several Letters had passed after the *Archbishop's* promotion, between him and *Mr. Warren* concerning our *Author*.

And,

And, as the *Archbishop* shewed by many expressions of kindness and affection, a hearty good-will to his *Correspondent*, and a plain design of doing him any kindness in his power, so in one of his Letters he expressly directed, that he should send his Son to him, so soon as he had obtained the Degree of *Master of Arts*, with an assurance that *he would take care of him*.

This *singular* kindness to the *Author's* Father had its foundation in the knowledge the *Archbishop* had of him, when he was *Principal* of *Alban Hall* in *Oxford*. To which place his *fame* and reputation, as a *Governor*, had drawn together many young *Scholars*, to the number of sixty and more, amongst which *Mr. Warren* was one. And an Honour to *him* and his family it was to have
been

been so much in the esteem of so *wise* and so *good* a man. I say so *wise* and *good* a man; for certainly Dr. *Lamplugh's* conduct does fully justify that character of him.

FOR, as his humanity, piety, and liberality never were questioned by any, so a true love of his Country and a just regard to the Liberties of it seem as visible in him as in any *Prelate* of his time. And accordingly the *Oxford Historian* *, after shewing willingness enough to represent him to disadvantage, is forced, in the close of his account, to give him this *full* and great, tho' *short* character. "He was esteemed
"as a Person of REAL WORTH, and a
"GREAT LOVER of GOD and Man-
"kind."

* Antho. a Wood, Ath, Oxon. p. 1175.

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THE good *Archbishop's* death happening about the time that the offer before-mentioned was made by *Sir William Twisden*, it was thought advisable, as was said, to close with it.

WHILST our *Author* was at *Peckham*, employed in the weighty office of instructing several young Gentlemen in the *Greek* and *Latin* Languages, he had the happiness of recommending himself so effectually to *Sir William Twisden*, that he voluntarily became a Solicitor for him, with *Dr. Sprat*, then *Bishop* of *Rochester*, for the *Rectory* of *Trosscliff* in that neighbourhood, of the value of an hundred pounds *per annum* and upwards, and accordingly the *Bishop* collated him into it, soon after he had taken *Priest's Orders*.

It

It must be remembered also that after he became known to the *Bishop*, he was encouraged by him to expect farther expressions of his favour, and such as might induce him to fix in that *Diocese*. For it was certainly much for his reputation, that a person so famed for parts and for skill in all *polite Literature*, and so great a Judge of the *Abilities* of others, as *Bishop Sprat* was, should entertain so good an opinion of him. But this not happening till he had obtained the power (by being chosen *Fellow* of his *College*) of residing again in the *University*, it is not to be wondered at, that he was not eager in pursuing an *Interest* that would probably so soon deprive him of the opportunity of that manner of life and conversation, with which he was then so well pleased.

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UPON the *ninth* of *Feb.* 1692 he was unanimously chosen Fellow of *Queen's College* in his absence, when he little expected it, and had, in a manner, given over all thoughts about it.

This event made an immediate alteration in his own *Scheme*, and in the *Scheme* of Sir *William Twissden* too, with regard to the farther education of his Children. It was now agreed, that our *Author* should return to *College*, and take with him the *two eldest* of his *Pupils*: This was accordingly done, and the young Gentlemen continued for some time under his care, to their own satisfaction, and their Father's.

Now our *Author* was placed in that very *situation* he had so much desired, and, according to his *Duty*, he endeavoured to make it useful to

others, as well as *himself*, by taking the trouble of directing the studies of several other *young Gentlemen*, who were committed to his care; and of instructing them in *Academical Learning*.

DR. PATRICK, then Bishop of *Ely*, who had been some time Fellow of *Queen's College*, and retained a great love for it, did prefer several learned and worthy men from thence; and, among others, our *Author* had some share of his favour. For, in a year or two after his resettlement in College, he was nominated by the *Bishop* to the Cure of *Trinity-Church* in *Cambridge*, which he undertook and discharged intirely to the satisfaction of the Patron, and the *Parishioners*.

INDEED he performed the duties of his place (one of which was that
of

of reading prayers twice a day, upon the week-days) with so much *assiduity*, and preached so *usefully*, as to deserve and meet with the *particular* esteem of those who had the benefit of his *ministrations*.

WHILST he continued to hold *this cure*, and *another*, to which he was afterwards removed by the favour of the learned and good *Bishop* last mentioned; he frequently preached before the *University* in *St. Mary's Church*, in a manner that was very acceptable to that learned audience. Two of those sermons, and which are the *fourth* and *fifth* in the *second volume* of this *collection*, were particularly taken notice of and commended by persons of eminence for learning.

IN the year 1702, he commenced *Bachelor* in *Divinity*, after he had performed all his *exercises* for it.

IN the year 1703, the learned *Mr. Johnson* proposing to retire from the great cure of *Mergate* in the Isle of *Thanet*, inquiry was made by the directions of the then Most Reverend *Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Tenison*, through his *Diocese*, and through the University of *Cambridge*, for a proper Person to succeed so learned and able a man, in so large and so difficult a *Cure*.

AFTER some time the *Author* was apply'd to, by *Dr. Lunn* the present worthy *Archdeacon of Huntingdon*, and upon the Recommendation of *Dr. Green*, then Master of *Benet College*, to his *Grace*, was fixed upon by him as one well qualified for so important a trust.

THE event shewed that a very right judgment had been made concerning him : For, he not only performed

formed the various and difficult *du-
ties* of his place, with great care and
affiduity, but through the happiness
of a great *strength*, and an uncom-
mon *distinctness* of *voice*, whereby
he was easily heard in a large and
crowded congregation, and also by
a studied *plainness* in the general
manner of his *preaching*, he acquir-
ed so great an esteem among his Pa-
rishioners of all sorts, and was so much
respected and beloved by them, that
he had plainly the power, from his
then *situation*, of being *uncommon-
ly* useful in the discharge of his *holy
function*.

AND this consideration had its
just weight with him, and served
greatly to lighten his *burthen*, and
did so far make it *agreeable* to him,
that he did, for some time, seriously
a 2 desire

desire that it might be his lot to be fixed in that place.

I N D E E D afterwards he became more sensible of the *fatigue* in the discharge of the duties of his Cure, than he at first did, and began to apprehend that he had undertaken more than he could with *safety* perform without an *assistant*: And being uncertain how long it might be, before he should be enabled to maintain one, from the addition of any other *Benefice*, He entertained thoughts of quitting *Mergate*, after somewhat above two years residence there.

A N D after due deliberation he signified his thoughts in a letter to *Dr. Green* the *Archbishop's* Chaplain, and accordingly in some little time *his Grace* provided a *Successor* for him.

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THE occasion of this sudden and *unexpected turn* was variously represented, according to the different humour or *party* of those who gave their opinions concerning it.

ONE report there was, that I am obliged to take notice of and to refute, in justice to our *Author*, and in vindication of his *character*; and that was, — That he had fallen under his *Grace's* displeasure upon the account of his conduct with regard to some *publick* affairs at that time.

FOR this *report*, how confidently soever made, was altogether without foundation; and *his Grace* was so far from conceiving any dislike of him, with relation to his conduct in any particular whatsoever, that he was desirous of his *continuance* at *Mergate*, and had plainly an intention

tion of making the same agreeable to *Him*, by some additional *Benefice*.

THIS appears evidently from what passed in discourse between *his Grace* and the reverend *Mr. Lewis* the present worthy *Minister* of *Mergate*, and our Author's immediate Successor, when He waited upon the *Archbishop* after He had been nominated to this *Cure*.

For the good *Archbishop* was pleased in a very kind and obliging manner to declare, — “That he was
“sorry *Mr. Warren* was resolved
“to leave *Mergate* so soon;” and
added, “That he did not forget
“his *friends*, though he could not
“always answer their expectations
“so soon, as they desired he should.”

AFTER this the *Author* was advised to seek an opportunity of discharging

charging his *Function* in some *Cure* or *Lecture* in *London*.

He was hardly settled in *London*, before he was chosen *Lecturer* of *All-Hallows, Lombard-street*; and soon after he obtained the *Curacy* of *St. Benet-Fink*.

In this parish he resided, and from his diligent and laudable manner of discharging his *duty*, and from his regular and agreeable conversation, was exceedingly beloved by his *Parishioners*, and lived in great *friendship* and *esteem* with them.

DURING his residence upon this *Cure* in *London*, he often preached in one or other of the largest *Churches*, and before the most considerable *Congregations* in and about *London*. And was taken notice of by many as excellently qualified for the performance of his *Office* in such a man-

ner as is justly expected in *such* assemblies.

HE was well known to, and much respected by the learned *Dr. Stanhope*, then *Dean* of *Canterbury*. The learned *Dr. Mosse* Chaplain to the honourable Society of *Grey's-Inn*, and afterwards *Dean* of *Ely*, was also his intimate friend, and had known his integrity and capacity many years, and had a true *friendship* for him.

THESE two learned and worthy men having a particular friendship with, and interest in *Dr. Blackall*, joined together in a recommendation of our *Author* to him when he was nominated to the *Bishoprick* of *Exeter*, as a proper person for his *Chaplain*.

THE good *Bishop* readily consented, and accordingly took him down with him in the capacity of his *domestick Chaplain*, when he went

to reside in his *Diocese* in the year 1708.

HE continued in that relation to the *Bishop* for seven years, and in so full a possession of that *most excellent* man's esteem, that *he* had great comfort and satisfaction under that attendance, though he was far from receiving so much benefit in the way of *preferment*, as might have been expected, and had been usual, in *such* a situation.

FOR this happening from divers cross accidents, which were the occasions of uneasiness and disappointment to the *Bishop* as well as the *Chaplain*, did not lessen their mutual esteem and confidence; and accordingly, *the one* was as much honoured and revered, and *the other* as much esteemed, as if every thing had succeeded according to their wishes.

IN

IN the year 1709, upon the second of April, the Bishop collated him to a *Prebend* in *St. Peter's, Exon.*

IN the same year, upon the fourteenth of June, he collated him to the *Rectory* of *Farringdon*, about six miles from *Exeter*. And about *Midsummer* in the same year he gave him *St. Stephen's* in *Exeter*, which he held by *sequestration*.

SOME little time afterwards he was elected by the *Dean* and *Chapter* of *St. Peter's, Exon*, to one of their weekly *lectures* in the said *Church*.

ALL these *benefices* together amounted, in yearly value, to a sum very little exceeding the income he had when he first became the *Bishop's Chaplain*. But, as they lay near together, and especially as they were looked upon as earnest of farther favour, they were thankfully accepted, though they could

could not be holden without quitting what was in itself, in a manner, as eligible.

HIS income was indeed afterwards augmented, by his becoming *Surrogate* both to the *Chancellor* of the *Diocese*, and to the *Archdeacon* of *Exon*, but that was not without an increase of trouble and expence of time.

H E soon made himself so well acquainted with his *new* business, that he acquitted himself intirely to the satisfaction of all Persons concerned, and in a manner that gave fresh proofs of his capacity and judgment.

I N the year 1710 he was chosen by the Clergy of the *Diocese* of *Exeter* to be one of their *Proctors* in the Convocation then summoned to meet, and he duly attended the *sessions* thereof for the two first years, during

during which time he had always the honour of being entrusted with the *Bishop's Proxy* as *Archdeacon* of *Exeter*.

ABOUT this time it was that the good Bishop acquainted our *Author* with his design of making application to obtain for him the honour of being a *Chaplain* in ordinary to QUEEN ANN.

HE was very sensible of the Bishop's kindness herein; and of the honour and probable advantage of such a *promotion*, but he could not prevail upon himself to quicken the designed application on his behalf; But declared that he had no opinion of his being able to acquit himself in the *Royal Presence* in such a manner, as would be satisfactory to himself, and therefore had no *ambition* of ever being advanced to any honour of that kind.

THIS

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THIS was no very common instance of *humility* in a man of his qualifications, at a time of life especially, when, if ever, a prospect of Court-Favour is wont to be agreeable.

It happened about the same time that a living of considerable value, and one of the best in the *Bishop* of *Exeter's* gift, fell void, to which our *Author* had just reason to expect to be collated.

THE good Bishop expressly told him that he looked upon that Benefice to be, in right, so much his, that he did not think himself at liberty to *collate* any one else to it, without his consent. He added that, he could not however deny that he had, for a *particular* reason (which he mentioned) a great desire to give it to another,

ther, if he could have our *Author's* free consent that he should do so.

THE person intended to be obliged was a man of learning and distinction; and the *Bishop* seemed to think himself under a kind of obligation to shew him some distinguishing mark of his favour; whereupon our *Author* gave *that* consent the *Bishop* seemed desirous of; by which he shewed a great confidence in his *Patron's* good will towards him, and a greater proof of his own *modesty*, and dutiful regard to his *Lord's* satisfaction, than to his own advantage.

A MORE selfish and a more distrustful man than he might *then* have apprehended, what did indeed happen, that the *Bishop* might never afterwards have the power of giving

ing him an *equivalent* for what he so quietly suffered to slip from him.

IN the year 1711 he commenced *Doctor* in *Divinity*, and before the end of it he married Mrs. *J. Grimsted*, only Daughter of — *Grimsted*, Gent. near Wells in *Somersetshire*. He still continued in his Relation to the *Bishop*, and officiated as *Chaplain* till the year 1715, when *Dr. Stuart* succeeded him in that place.

IN the year 1716, a little before the *Bishop* died, and when his life was despaired of, the *Author* was sent for, on a sudden, from *Farringdon*, where he then resided, to attend the *Bishop* at *Exeter*.

WHEN he came he found measures had been concerted for a *Collation* of him to the *Archdeaconry* of *Exon*, and Mr. *Woolcomb* to a *Prebend* and the *Treasureship* of the Church, upon

on what was then called the Bishop's *Dimission* of them.

IT IS to be observed that the *Benefices* before named were some of those which the *Bishop* held by virtue of the *Commendam capere*, so that the *Collation* to them appertaining originally to the *Bishoprick*, he thought he had a right, by quitting the possession of them, to collate others to them at discretion; and the rather, because it had been the practice, as is said, for former *Bishops* to collate to *Benefices* that had been held by them in the same manner.

HOWEVER that may be, upon our *Author's* coming to the *Palace* he found instruments of *Dimission* drawing, whereby the *Bishop* quitted his right to the possession of the said *Benefices*, and also instruments of *Collation* of himself to the *Arch-*
I *deaconry*

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deaconry of *Exon*, and *Mr. Woolcombe* to the Prebend and Treasurership, together with *Mandates* to the Dean and Chapter, reciting the said *Collations*, and injoining immediate *Installation*.

UPON *November 22. 1716* the *Mandates* were served upon the then *President* of the *Chapter* in the absence of the *Dean*. The *President* said there would be a *Chapter* upon the *Saturday* following, and that he would then give an answer.

I MUST here farther acquaint the reader, that heretofore, when a *Bishop* of *Exeter* held any Preferment or Benefice of his own *Collation*, by virtue of the *Commendam Capere*, he did it without taking possession thereof by any formality of *institution* and *induction*.

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WHEN

When therefore he attempted to fill the *Benefices* before mentioned by virtue of the original right of *Collation* to them, it was looked upon as an invasion of a right devolved to the *Crown*; so that much less for want of institution and induction there had not of a long time been a *plenty*.

Whereupon the *Chapter* justly thought it not safe to concur in a transaction which had so much the appearance of being *illegal*, whatever the practice might have been in like cases*. So that when the *Chapter* was held, and *Dr. Warren* and *Mr. Woolcomb* tendered the *Mandates* to the persons present at it, demanding *immediate installation* according to the tenor

* For this reason, as I am informed, the Bishop who succeeded was instituted by the *Metropolitan* into the *Benefices* he held by virtue of the *Commendam Capere* upon the presentation of the *Crown*.

of them, the *Chapter* refused and adjourned to that day fortnight. Before which time the good *Bishop* dying, an intire end was put to the whole affair.

UPON a due consideration of this case, I think it must be acknowledged by all that our *Author* did hereby suffer no kind of *injury* or even hardship, whatever his *disappointment* might be.

BUT then as he suffered no kind of *injury* himself, so certainly he neither injured nor affronted any Person by his conduct herein. For it cannot be thought that he should have *demurred* upon accepting so valuable a *Benefice*, or have canvassed his *Patron's* right of *Collation*, even if he had had any suspicions concerning it, which, I will venture to say, he had not.

Since therefore, he was neither the *Projector* of the *scheme*, nor the *Promoter*, nor indeed any otherwise concerned in it, but by accepting the kindness offered, and by doing in a *becoming* manner, what was necessary to make it of any effect, he was undoubtedly clear of all just imputation for the share he had in this affair, which proved so *unhappy* to him.

HOWEVER, although what is here affirmed is punctually true, it was far from being an easy matter to make it appear to the satisfaction of those whose resentments were raised upon this occasion.

ACCORDINGLY a very little time passed, before he was dispossessed both of his *Lecture* in the *Church* of *St. Peter's* and of his *Surrogate's* place to the *Chancellor* of the *Dio-*
cese.

case. I do not censure the conduct of any person herein, being fully persuaded he was generally thought to have been a *principal* in the *scheme*; however I hope I may be indulged in acquainting the world (because it is no more than doing *justice* to the *Author's* character) that at the same time that he was dispossessed of a third part of his income, there lay no kind of exception against either his *capacity* or his *moral* character, and that it was *expresly* declared by one of those who were concerned in dispossessing him,——That “he was one of the most WORTHY CLERGYMEN in the *Diocese*.”

His loss would have been in a great measure made up by that worthy Gentleman and his good friend the late *John Rolle* of *Stephenston*, Esq; by his presenting him as he did to

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the Rectory of *Bickton* just then void, if he had been suffered to continue to hold the Church of *St. Stephens* in *Exon* by *sequestration*, as he had till then done.

But that being disposed of to another, so soon as our Author was in possession of *Bickton*, 'tis certain his *income* still continued reduced in the proportion before-mentioned; neither was there any addition made to it, in the *twenty* years he lived afterwards.

BAD as this misfortune was, yet it did not come alone.

FOR not long after, viz. in the year 1720, he was unhappily drawn in with the rest of the deluded part of the nation, to become an *Adventurer* upon the ruinous and wickedly executed scheme of the *South-Sea* Company, whereby he sustained the
loss

loss of several hundred pounds; which, though it was the effect of too *rash* a conduct, yet was no other than what men, to vast numbers, of the very *best characters* as well with regard to *wisdom* and *policy*, as to *piety* and strict *religion*, were deceived into throughout the whole

These great and unexpected *misfortunes* he bore with an uncommon *fortitude*, and a truly *Christian* resolution. For though his *family* continued for many years afterwards to increase, which unavoidably occasioned frequent returns of the remembrance of his *disappointments*, yet he was so far *master* of his *Passions*, as seldom to appear to be *greatly* affected thereby, and accordingly he ever preserved the reputa-

tion of a wise, considerate, and pious man.

His being *Prebendary* of *St. Peter's Church* gave him the opportunity, in his own turn, and by preaching for others who lived at a distance, of often shewing his abilities, as a *Preacher*, in that *Church*, before the *Bishop*, *Dean*, and *Chapter* and a very numerous Audience. And it has been a rule with me in the choice of the *Sermons* here published, to select those only, which were either *entirely* or for the *greatest* part, preached by him *there*.

Now I am upon this point, I must mention one particular with regard to my *own* conduct, which may perhaps be thought to need an *apology*.

Upon the *fifth* of *November*, in the year 1736, the *Author* preached
in

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in *St. Peter's* upon the infinite *Power* and *Goodness*, *Justice* and *Wisdom* of the *Divine Providence*, and applied what he advanced under each of these heads agreeably to the *solemnity* of the *Day*.

This sermon, preached so little time before his death, had such an effect upon *many* of his *Auditors*, as to cause *them* to desire particularly that it might be one in the collection. I was made acquainted with this before I had myself seen the *Sermon*, and thought it *then* so proper that the request should be gratify'd, that I readily declared that it was my intention to make it the *first* in the *collection*. When therefore it will now appear that *this Sermon* is *excluded*; it may be thought that some *reason* ought to be given for the
disap-

disappointment of so just an *expectation*. — Now the case was this:

THERE being *another Sermon*, among several, upon the subject of the *Gunpowder-Treason*, which I thought upon many accounts rather to be chosen than that which was requested, and it being plainly improper, in so *small a collection*, to publish *two* so very long *Sermons*, (as they happen to be) upon that *single occasion*, I thought I should not do justice either to the *Author*, or to the *generality* of the *Subscribers*, if I did not publish that which I judged would be best received by them.

THIS Sermon was preached but *five weeks* before his death, though I believe it was then little apprehended that his death was so near. But he had found *some* tokens of

decay the *summer* before. And, doubtless, it was owing, under GOD, to a most excellent *constitution*, as well as a *regular* life, and a diligent watchfulness over his *passions*, that the *symptoms*, he at last complain-
ed of, did not seize him sooner.

His disappointments were *trials* of a searching kind, and he shewed great *natural* strength, and *Christian* virtue, that he suffered so little from them either in his *constitution*, or his *temper*.

It pleased GOD to take him to himself upon *December* 11. 1736, in the 67th year of his age, and he was buried *December* 13. according to his own desire, in the *Church-yard* of *Farringdon* at the east end of the *Church*.

He left Issue one *Son* and six *Daughters*.

I HAVE

I HAVE made the foregoing *Narrative* with no other view than to give the true reason for publishing these Sermons in the way of *subscription*, and to vindicate the *Author* from any imputations that might be cast upon his memory, for having left his family under any kind of necessity of having recourse to it, without the least design of reflecting upon any person whatsoever either living or dead.

As to the Sermons, they are submitted to the judgment of the world, and there can be no need to say any thing here concerning them. If they cannot plead for themselves, it will be to little purpose for me to turn *advocate* for them, and if they can, they will meet with a favourable

rable acceptance without any one's
recommendation.

OF INDEED the great number of *Sub-*
scribers has so effectually superseded
all occasion of *marking* their *excel-*
lencies in order to promote the *sale* of
them, that I have rather reason to
be solicitous, lest the *expectation* con-
cerning them may be already raised
too high, in which case all previous
commendations would only serve to
heighten the *disappointment.*

NOT that I do in any respect think
meanly of them myself, or that they
stand in need of any *apology.* For,
in truth, if I had not thought them
useful, and to a good degree *accu-*
rate also, I would not have been con-
cerned in the *publication.*

THERE are several points of
great importance treated of, that
might seem to require a larger dis-
cussion

cussion than our *Author* had room for; and I had once a design of enlarging this *Preface* by adding something for the farther illustration of some such particulars in diverse parts of these *Sermons*.

BUT since there is no necessity that it should be done, and the *Preface* is already swelled to its proposed length, I shall decline it at present, and conclude with due acknowledgments, in the Name of the *Author's* Widow and Children, for the favour and great honour of so numerous a *Subscription*.

Cavendish, May 1.

1739.

Rich^d Warren.

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S E R M O N I.

The Schism of the Samaritans
compared with that of our
Protestant Dissenters.

J O H N iv. 9. latter Part.

*For the Jews have no dealings with
the Samaritans.*

THE whole verse is thus: *Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.* SERM. I.

IN the foregoing verses of this chapter we find that our Saviour was upon a journey from Judea into Galilee, and because Samaria was in the way, and he must needs go through it, being wearied with his journey, he sat down to rest himself at Jacob's well, whilst his Disciples were gone into the city Sychar, to buy food. During that interval he enter'd into discourse with a woman who was a Samaritan, and came to the well to draw water; who, after he had desired her to give him to drink, seemed to express some surprize at his request,

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The Schism of the Samaritans compared

SERM. I.

that *he who was a Jew* should expect any kindness from one who was a *Samaritan*. Forasmuch as such things were not wont to be done; there being a mortal hatred of long continuance between the *Jews* and *Samaritans*. Now how faulty soever the *Samaritans* were in giving the first provocation to this un-neighbourly behaviour, the *Jews* were even with them, in the manner of their resentment of it. For they not only would have *no dealings* with them; not only broke off all commerce, and friendly intercourse with them, but made it *a piece of religion*, to be both inhospitable and uncharitable towards them: For even thus far is the sense of the expression of the *text* to be carried, when it says, *The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans*.

I have pitched upon these words for the subject of my discourse at this time, with a design in the

I. *FIRST* place, To shew you, what were the grounds and occasions of this deadly hatred between the *Jews* and *Samaritans*. And then,

II. *SECONDLY*, To make such reflections upon the matter, as (I hope) may be useful to us.

I. *FIRST* then, I shall shew you how it came to pass that the *Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans*: And if we will trace this up to its *first original*, we must look back as far as the reign of *Rehoboam*, the son of King



King Solomon, whose acts are mentioned in the first *Book of Kings* * ; there you'll find that the foundation of all those animosities and quarrels that did so long subsist among them, was laid in the *revolt* that was made by ten of the twelve tribes of *Israel*, from *Rehoboam* to *Jeroboam*; and in what *Jeroboam* then did, to settle and strengthen himself in his new-gotten kingdom. You will find there that the two tribes of *Judah* and *Benjamin* only, continued in obedience to *Rehoboam*; the other ten being taken away from him by GOD, as a punishment of his father *Solomon's* sins, and given to *Jeroboam*: But tho' this must necessarily make a very great alteration in the civil affairs of this people, being now become two distinct and separate kingdoms, and the whole matter, thus far, was, as 'tis † said, from GOD; there was, however, no alteration hereby intended to be made in matters of religion: But as their religion was one, and the way and manner of religious worship the same, throughout all the tribes when they were but one kingdom; so ought the religion to have continued one and the same, when the tribes were divided into two kingdoms, as when they made but one. For tho' GOD gave commission to *Jeroboam* for the change he made in the civil constitution, he restrained him from making any change in the religion established for the use of the whole body of the *Jews*. For at

* Chap. xii.

† 1 Kings xii. 24.

The Schism of the Samaritans compared

SERM. I.



the same time that the prophet *Abijah* assured *Jeroboam* of the kingdom, he commanded him to * *keep his statutes and his judgments*, that is, the laws of the *Jewish religion*, as his *servant David* had done: Promising him that if he did so, *he would build him a sure house, as he built for David, and would give Israel unto him.*

THERE were indeed some laws of the *Jewish religion* that did seem inconsistent with this their *new constitution*; as particularly the law concerning the † *Passover*, which was not to be *sacrificed or eaten within any of their gates*, but only at the place which the LORD should choose to place his Name in, which was at *Jerusalem*: And likewise that other law, whereby ‡ *all the males of the children of Israel* were obliged *three times in a year, to appear before the LORD, with gifts, at the place which the LORD their GOD should choose*, and that was at *Jerusalem* too. These laws, I say, of the *Jewish religion*, seemed inconsistent with their present *new establishment*: For how could *two kingdoms* of different interests unite in *one common place* of worship? Or how could the subjects of *one kingdom*, nay, and the King of them too, come up thrice every year, to worship, in the territories, and in the *capital city* of the *other*, without manifest inconvenience, and hazard to them both? These are indeed objections which

* 1 Kings xi. 38. † Deut. xvi. 1. ‡ Deut. xvi. 16.

human policy would naturally suggest, in such a state of affairs as the *Israelites* were then in; and these were the very reasons that put *Jeroboam* upon doing of that which was ever after EMPHATICALLY call'd *the sin of Jeroboam*, whereby he made *Israel* to sin: He thought in his heart, * *That if the people should go up to worship and to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD, at Jerusalem, (as the law required) then would the heart of his people return to their rightful and lawful Lord, even unto Rehoboam; and that they would kill him, and go and submit themselves again to Rehoboam, King of Judah: Reasons of state outweighed all consideration of, and value for, the statutes and commandments of GOD. And the political inconveniencies that he apprehended might arise from observing the old law concerning the place and manner of the publick worship in this new situation of affairs, tempted him to reject the old law in this particular, notwithstanding GOD's express † promise to him, that a diligent observation of the said law should be his security, and the establishment of his throne.*

ALTHOUGH GOD had appointed *Jerusalem* to be the place of *publick worship*, for all the children of *Israel*; and tho', when GOD commanded them to appear there, every male of them, three times a year, he promised them that no one should ‡ *desire their land when*

* 1 Kings xii. 27. † 1 Kings xi. 38. ‡ Ex. xxxiv. 24.

they should go up to *appear before the LORD their GOD thrice in the year*. And tho' he had expressly * commanded *Jeroboam* to observe this, as well as all his other statutes; and had made a way for him to do so, by forbidding *Rehoboam* to attempt the recovery of the *ten tribes* back again, and by commanding † the *two tribes* which were his subjects, to look upon the rest and treat them *as their brethren*; notwithstanding all this, I say, *Jeroboam*, as 'tis ‡ said, *took counsel*; and trusting to the power of his *own policy* more than to the *promises* of GOD, makes alterations in the *established religion*, suitable to the alterations that he had made in the *state*; and pretending a great regard for the *ease* of his subjects, by saving them the trouble of taking so many long journeys every year *to go up to Jerusalem*, erects two temples, the one *in Dan*, and the other *in Bethel*, that they might serve GOD nearer home: And in these temples he sets up two *calves*, or *cherubim of gold*, like to those that were set up by GOD's appointment over the *mercy seat* in the *temple at Jerusalem*; and ordained feasts to be observed there, as they were observed in *Judah*; and the *sacrifices* to be offered, and *incense* to be burnt, by the *Priests* of his own MAKING, after the same manner as these things were done by GOD's institution at *Jerusalem*.

* 1 Kings xi. 38. † 1 Kings xii. 24. ‡ 1 Kings xii. 28.

with that of our Protestant Dissenters.

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SERM. I.

THIS is the account which the *Scripture* gives us of the sin of *Jeroboam*; by which it appears, that in the main it consisted only in his setting up *temples* and *altars* at *Dan* and *Bethel*, in opposition to the *temple* and *altars* that were at *Jerusalem*, and in keeping *those feasts*, and in offering *those sacrifices* of the law, in *other* places than those which GOD had appointed for them: For it does not appear from *Scripture*, that he ordained any *new forms*, or *methods* of *worship* for his subjects, that were different from those which were observed in *Jerusalem*: The *Scriptures* indeed do rather seem to insinuate the quite contrary; and that they continued in the *same* way of *worship*, according to the law of *Moses*, as they had done before; only in another place: For * *the calves of gold* which he set up in *Dan* and *Bethel*, were made in imitation of, and were like, the *two cherubim of gold* that overshadowed the *mercy seat* in the temple at *Jerusalem*: And they were designed as *symbols* of GOD's presence there among them, as the others were of his presence in the *Holy of Holies*. And he offered the *same* sacrifices, and burnt incense after the *same* manner as the law did enjoin, and all the alteration that the *Scripture* mentions him to have made in the law, was this, † that he changed the

* *Vid. Monæum de vitulis aureis.* † 1 Kings xii.
32, 33.

day of observing one of the solemn feasts, *the feast of tabernacles, or of gathering in harvest.* For whereas by the law of *Moses* it was ordered to be kept on the * *fifteenth day of the seventh month*; *Jeroboam* ordered *the feast* to be kept a month later, that is, upon the *fifteenth day of the eighth month.*

THE † *Scripture* indeed takes notice of this alteration made by him in the law of *Moses*, and with this reflection upon it, that *Jeroboam* ordained *the feast to be kept in the month that he had devised in his own heart.* But since the *Scripture*, when it takes notice of this particular deviation from the law, does not take notice of any other, it seems probable he *made no other*: But that in all other respects, the *ceremonies* of the law were at the first observed at *Dan* and *Bethel*, after the same manner as they were at *Jerusalem*: So that the sin, which we find so often in *Scripture* charged upon *Jeroboam*, as *his sin, by which he made Israel to sin*, was not the *changing or altering* the *LAWs* and customs that *Moses* had left; but the commanding them to be observed in *another PLACE* than that which *GOD* had appointed. And as this was more especially that sin of *Jeroboam*, which he is so often, and so *EMPHATICALLY* charged with, in *Scripture*; so 'tis likewise the very thing that gave the first rise to that *difference* and *animosity* that there was among the *tribes*; and which

* Lev. xxiii. 34.

† 1 Kings xii. 32.

continued,

continued, and was in being, in the time of our Saviour, which was almost a * thousand years after: For thus we are told, † that the resentment and abhorrence of this thing that was done by *Jeroboam*, was so great, not only at *Jerusalem*, but likewise throughout the *ten tribes* of *Israel*, that there came out of all the tribes of *Israel*, such as set their hearts to seek the LORD GOD of *Israel*, to *Jerusalem*, to sacrifice unto the LORD GOD of their Fathers.

WHEREUPON *Jeroboam* took upon himself to appoint *Priests* for the service of his temples, who were not of the seed of *Aaron*, nor of the tribe of *Levi*; which were the persons who by the law of *Moses* were appointed to serve in holy things before the LORD: But instead of these, he took of the lowest of the people, and even any one whoever would undertake it, he ‡ CONSECRATED HIM, and made him *Priest* of his high places: And this is another thing which the *Scripture* charges upon *Jeroboam* as his particular sin; which brought upon him the utter ruin of his house, so as to cause it to be cut off, and destroyed from off the face of the earth. We find indeed besides all this, the sin of || idolatry charged upon him: And 'tis evident, that the *ten tribes*, soon after their revolt, were grossly guilty of it; but then so were the other two tribes at *Jerusalem* too:

* 970. † 2 Chron. xi. 16. ‡ 1 Kings xiii. 33, 34. || 1 Kings xiv. 9.

SERM. I.

For 'tis said of them at the same time, in the days of * *Rehoboam*, that they too *built them high places, and images, and groves, and did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out*: So that this was not the peculiar sin of *Jeroboam*; neither do the *Scriptures* any where charge this upon him *emphatically as the sin by which he made Israel to sin*: But the thing that he did, that is said to become sin to him, and that is so particularly and peculiarly called *his sin*, was his separating himself and his people from the *publick worship of GOD*, as it was performed at *Jerusalem*: 'Twas in *erecting temples, and setting up altars, and fixing symbols of GOD's presence, in a place different from that which GOD himself had chosen to place his Name in*: 'Twas in *burning incense, and offering sacrifices upon such altars as GOD had not appointed*; and in *CONSECRATING such persons to minister at those altars who were not of GOD's institution*.

THIS was the sin of *Jeroboam*, and this was the first beginning of that difference between the *Jews* and those of the *ten tribes*, which was afterwards very much widened, and grew up to great strife and contention: For after the *Jews* were returned from their captivity in *Babylon*, and had begun to rebuild the temple at *Jerusalem*, which had long laid in ruins; the

* 1 Kings xiv. 23.

Samaritans, who were then a mixed race of *Assyrians* and *Israelites*, and whose religion consisted in serving GOD after the * manner of *Jeroboam's* devising, and in serving *images*, after the manner of the nations: These *Samaritans*, I say, did what they could to weaken the hands of the *Jews*, and to trouble them in their building of the temple; and *hired counsellors* against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of *Cyrus* King of *Persia*, even until the reign of *Darius* King of *Persia*, for the space of fifteen years: All which time there was a great struggle among them, as you may read at large in the fourth, and in several other chapters in the book of *Ezra*.

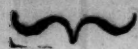
BUT that which gave the finishing stroke to the quarrel between the *Jews* and *Samaritans*, and made the difference irreconcilable, was this: There was, it seems, a great multitude of the *Jews*, who during their captivity *had taken to themselves strange wives of the people of the land*, where they had been captives; which they were obliged by a solemn † covenant to divorce, and put away from them.

BUT as *Josephus* † informs us, there was one *Manasses*, the brother of *Jaddus* the High Priest, and a companion with him in the office, who had married the daughter of *Sanballat*, who was at that time governor of *Sama-*

* 2 Kings xvii. 27.
cap. 8.

† Ezra xii.

† Antiq. lib. xi.



ria, and was an inveterate enemy of the *Jews*, as you may see in the book of *Nehemiah*. This *Manasses* refusing to put away his wife, and being on that account prohibited from executing the Priest's office at *Jerusalem*; he retires to *Samaria*, and by the help and assistance of his father-in-law, builds a temple upon mount *Gerizim*, and becomes the *High Priest* of it, independent upon, and equal to the High Priest at *Jerusalem*; and this set matters all in a flame: The *Samaritans* held their temple in as great veneration as the *Jews* did theirs; and the *Jews* resented this as an affront to GOD, and to their religion; and looked upon the people of *Samaria* as execrable; nothing thenceforward was so hateful to the *Jews* as a *Samaritan*; they looked upon it as a fault to have any dealings with them in the common business of life, and refused them the usual offices of civility and humanity. And the *Samaritans*, on the other side, were no ways behind them, in their perverseness and spite towards the *Jews*: And thus it continued to our Saviour's days; thus it was at that very time when he talked with the woman of *Samaria*; this was the reason of that question which she proposed to our Saviour in the words before the text: *How is it that thou being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?* And 'twas upon these grounds that the *Jews* had no dealings with the *Samaritans*.

AND

AND now I have done with the *first* thing that I proposed, which was to shew you what the grounds and occasions were of that *deadly hatred* that was between the *Jews* and the *Samaritans*. And I have been the *longer*, and the *more particular* in this account that I have here given you of it, that you may be the better able to see the truth of those *reflections* and *inferences* which I proposed in the SECOND PLACE to make from it; and what those are I am now to shew you.

I. AND FIRST, In the account that I have now given you, you cannot but have taken notice, that this great difference and dissension between the *Jews* and *Samaritans*, was about matters of *religion*: And tho' there might be many observations made from hence of use, yet I shall at present make but one, and that is this, *THAT disputes and differences about religion are no good argument against the truth or divine authority of religion*. For the *religion* of the *Jews* was of GOD, at the same time that there were such warm contentions about it: Not but that there are many great and *sad inconveniences* that do attend all such differences, and the *true religion* itself suffers very much by them, inas-much as they do very much *unsettle* weak minds, and *confound* the ignorant, and *solely grieve* and perplex the most knowing: Inas-much as they give occasion of *scandal* to *heathens*, and are a matter of *sport* and *diversion* to

to scoffers and atheists; and do both cause the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, and the very friends of religion to fall out, and become enemies to each other.

BUT tho' this is a very good reason why we ought, if possible, and as much as lies in us, to be of *one mind*, and to agree in matters of religion, and to subdue all those lusts and passions, that are ever the first occasions of all differences about it; and tho' it shews us plainly the *guilt* and *wickedness* of those that propagate and foment them; yet it is at the same time an *argument* of the *natural* sense that mankind has, of the necessity and importance of religion in general, since they think it worth their while to employ so much of their *zeal* and earnestness about it: And tho' this reflects severely upon the measures and methods that *some men* take, for the establishing of what they esteem to be the truth; yet it shews at the same time, that there is an *intrinsic* worth and excellency in the *truth*, since men will strive and contend so earnestly, even for the *false appearances* of it.

AND therefore, altho' the way and manner in which the cause of religion is managed, may sometimes, and does too often reflect upon the *discretion* and *sincerity* of those that manage it; and tho' the *divisions* and *differences* themselves, that are about religion, are the *shame*, and reproach, and the *sin* of those people that occasion them, yet they shew that religion itself is a matter of great moment and

concern: *Religion* could never be made such a handle for division, and *strife*, and *contention* in the world, if it was not generally esteemed a matter of the greatest consequence.

II. SECONDLY, From the account that has been given you may observe, that altho' the great difference that was between the *Jews* and *Samaritans*, was about matters of *religion*; yet the first ground and occasion of them was *worldly interest and policy*, and the sinful *lusts* of men: Thus, as you may remember, they were *reasons of state*, and mere *carnal regards* that made *Jeroboam* set up *other altars* and places of *worship*, than those which GOD had appointed for the *Israelites*; and 'twas a vicious *indulgence* of their *ease* and *sloth*, that made *them* so readily comply with * him. And as these were the causes of the *first* difference and division; so 'twas *malice*, and *revenge*, and the *impetus* of his *carnal affection*, that made *Manasses* give the finishing stroke to it; by erecting a *temple* upon mount *Gerizim*, in opposition to that at *Jerusalem*: And 'tis indeed, from these very same principles, that all the false doctrines and *heresies*, all the *schisms* and divisions, that either have been, or that are now in the world, do proceed.

For all the *necessary* truths and precepts of *religion* are *plain* and *clear* enough of themselves, as they are laid down in the *Scripture*,

* See 2 Kings xii. 27, 28.

but

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SERM. I. but worldly *interest*, and men's *sinful lusts*, put them upon finding out ways to *obscure* and *pervert* them.

WHEN any of the truths of *religion* do thwart their worldly designs, or base inclinations, they then set themselves to thwart *religion*, or to make such *schemes* of it, as will best serve their turn, and suit their appetites: And indeed, every *vicious* and *disorderly passion* of itself, if it be not restrained, does naturally tend this way; insomuch that in most *heresies* and *schisms*, you may see the very *particular vice* and *passion* that first occasioned them; and you will ever find, that there is either pride, or ambition, or self-conceit, or malice, or licentiousness, at the bottom of every one of them; one or more of *these lusts and passions* set a *bias* upon men's wills, and bribe their understandings into an approbation of the most *absurd opinions* imaginable, that do but humour and *gratify* those *lusts*. Thus 'tis in St. Paul's* account, where, as he prophesies of the *heresies* and *divisions* that there would be among *Christians*; so he makes men's *lusts* to be the *cause* of them, and the *sole occasion* why they would not endure *sound doctrine*, but *turned away their ears from the truth*; and heaped to themselves *teachers after their own lusts*: And in another place †, he makes the reason of their *strife* and *divisions* to be, because *they were carnal*: And the same ‡ Apostle does expressly assign

* 2 Tim. iv. 3, 4. † 1 Cor. iii. 3. ‡ 1 Tim. i. 19.

men's putting away a good conscience as the reason of their making shipwreck of the faith; and upon this very reason, our Church has with great judgment appointed, that, at the very same time that we pray against all *false doctrine, and heresy, and schism*; we should pray likewise against *hardness of heart, and contempt of GOD's word and commandment*, as the causes of them. So that 'tis the *unruliness* of men's lusts and passions, that all *schismatical doctrines* and practices do owe their rise to: Whatever *pious pretences* men may make for their *divisions*, there is no *real* goodness at all at the bottom; but pride and ambition, hypocrisy and malice, men's untuly passions and worldly interests, first lead them into them, and the *crafty politicks* of cunning and designing men improve and propagate them; and I don't scruple to say, that 'tis from these roots that *all our schisms and divisions* have sprung up, and spread abroad, among us. Conscience indeed was ever pretended, but I think it no breach of *charity* to think it was *but a pretence*; because, as there was nothing of that *meek and humble spirit* of the *Gospel*, in the behaviour of those who were *most active*, for what they called a *FARTHER REFORMATION*, and as there never was any thing urged by them in *defence* of their proceedings, that was thought a *justification* by any calm and learned man among the *reformed* abroad; so they have not agreed, even among themselves, at different

18 *The Schism of the Samaritans compared*

SERM. I. times, in the manner of making their own defence.

THUS at first they gave for a reason of their *separation*, the pretended *sinfulness* of our *communion*, charging the terms of it as **POPISH** and **ANTICHRISTIAN**. AFTERWARDS, when they found the *Church* established upon the *principle* of an *indulgence* to *scrupulous consciences*, whereby their mouths were stopped, with regard to their usual clamour of *persecution*, and yet that they were as incapable as ever, of obtaining any *posts* of *profit* in the state, without at least an **OCCASIONAL conformity**, they forthwith abated of their *antient rigour*, they no longer charged our communion as *sinful*, nor *dared* they longer to asperse the terms thereof as **POPISH** and **ANTICHRISTIAN**. — They were now only *too formal*, *dull*, and *unedifying*: But they might without danger be complied with, at least **OCCASIONALLY**.

BUT now at last they have so far *softened* their first **OUTRAGIOUS CHARGE**, that they would fain make the world believe that there is after all little or no difference between us, but that they and we make but *one* and the *same Church*. That since they profess the *same faith*, and preach the *same word*, and administer the *same sacraments*, they are really *one with us*, and so now, instead of giving any reasons to *justify* or *excuse* their **SCHISM**, they flatly deny that there is any.

'TIS



'TIS not my business now to shew the insufficiency of these reasons to justify their *separation*, for I have mentioned them only to shew how these men have differed from themselves, in the reasons they have, at *different* times, and under *different* views and circumstances, given to justify themselves; that I may from thence observe how much it is to be suspected, that the reasons they have at any time given for their *separation* are not the true ones; and that, since they are plainly contradictory to one another, that the *real reasons* are concealed, and that for this cause only, because they cannot be maintained. It makes it indeed probable that their *separation* is owing to the same cause that other *schisms* and *heresies* have been, that is, to *perverseness*; *pride*, and *disappointment*.

III. THIRDLY, In the account that has been given, of the difference between the *Jews* and the *Samaritans*, you may observe, that tho' the difference was about RELIGION, yet they did at the same time agree in all the necessary articles of *faith* and *practice*. For the *Samaritans*, from the erecting their temple down to the times of our *blessed Saviour*, renounced *idolatry* as well as the *Jews*; they received the *same law* the *Jews* did, offered the *same sacrifices*, used the *same sacraments*, expected the *same Messiah*, and yet for all this, there was utterly a great *fault* among them.

SERM. I.

Now the *inference* naturally to be drawn from hence is, that tho' Men may profess the *same doctrines*, and use the *same worship*, with the *true Church* of GOD, yet that they may not be *true members* of that *Church*. For thus far the *Samaritans* agreed with the *Jews*, and yet, as our *Saviour* has himself determined the point, they were out of the pale of the *Jewish Church*: For he directly tells the woman of *Samaria* — That *salvation* was of the *Jews*. And upon this account * our *Saviour* calls the *Samaritan* that was cleansed, a *stranger*, that is, with regard to the covenant, and the promises of it; and † he joins the *Samaritans* with the *Gentiles*, or *Heathens*, and puts them in the same condition, with regard to the privilege of having the *Gospel* preached to them. Go not, says our *Saviour*, into the way of the *Gentiles*, and into any city of the *Samaritans* enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of *Israel*. Which shews, that men may be in the condition of *Heathens*, tho' they profess the *faith* of *Christians*; and that some men may have no right to the *blessings* and *privileges* of GOD's *Church*, tho' they own the *doctrines* and *sacraments* of it.

IV. FOURTHLY, The only difference between the *Jews* and *Samaritans*, as to religion, was about the *place* of worship: They agreed in

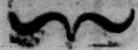
* Luke xvii. 18.

† Matt. x. 5, 6.

their

their belief of the *same* GOD, and owned both of them the *same* religion, and differed only about *the place* where they should perform it: The *Samaritans* worshipped GOD, after the manner of the law, upon mount *Gerizim*, in the temple, and upon the altar, that was set up by *Manasses*: But the *Jews* said, and our *Saviour* confirmed it, That in *Jerusalem* was the place where men ought to worship*: That place was appointed for the center of unity in worship; thither it was that the tribes of the LORD were to go up, to testify unto *Israel*, that they were of the same communion, and to give thanks together, with one mouth and heart, unto the Name of the LORD. But the *Samaritans* separated themselves from this temple of the LORD, and set up distinct altars, and places of worship of their own, in opposition to those that were established by the law: So that the sin and guilt of the *Samaritans*, according as the *Scriptures* have declared it, and our *Saviour* has determined it, did consist in this, and in this only, that whereas the established Church of the *Jews* was such that a man might safely hold communion with it, as our *Saviour* evidently shewed, by living in communion with it himself; yet the *Samaritans* wilfully separated from it, refused to join in communion with it, and set up distinct congregations and

* John iv. 20.



The Schism of the Samaritans compared

assemblies in *opposition* to it: And all this is, I think, a demonstration, that it is not enough for men to hold the *doctrines*, and observe the *worship* and *sacraments* of the *Church*, unless they do likewise live in *actual communion* with it.

BUT more particularly; from what has been said of the difference between the *Jews* and *Samaritans*, we may learn the *true nature* of *schism*, and likewise the great *sin* and *guilt* of it: For from what has been said, *schism*, as it regards the *Samaritans*, did consist in a *needless* and *unnecessary separation* from the established *Church* of *GOD* among the *Jews*; and with regard to the *Christian Church*, it consists in a man's *separating* himself, or in refusing to *hold communion* with that *particular Church* to which, according to the constitution of it, he does of right belong: And how then can men avoid the charge and *guilt* of *schism*, who, tho' they *own* the *doctrines*, and *worship*, and *sacraments* of such a *Church* of *CHRIST*, will yet refuse to join in communion with it; but set up places of worship, *separate from*, and in *opposition* to it? YET this, I believe, is a *charge* that the *Dissenters* from our *Church* (as unwilling as they are to hear it) will never be able to answer: I don't mean only those *enthusiasts* that are at the farthest distance possible from our *communion*; but those likewise, who, in the points of *faith*, and the *sacraments*, are the *same* with us, but yet *separate* from us.

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Be

BE it so, that they agree with us in all the ESSENTIAL points of religion: So did the *Samaritans* with the *Jews*; and yet tho' they worshipped the *same* GOD, and, for ought that appears to the contrary, after the *same* manner too, as the *Jews* did, yet because they would not do it in *unity* and conjunction with the *Jews*, our Saviour pronounces of them, that they *worshipped they knew not what* *. So that when men differ no otherwise from each other, than in the point of *communion*, one or other of them must be guilty of a *schism*.

AND this is exactly the case between the *Dissenters* and Us; and on which side the charge of *schism* is to be laid, there is no impartial man but may, from what has been said, very easily judge.

THAT they have separated themselves from the *communion* of our *Church* no one can deny; that we require any *sinful terms* of communion they *dare not*, now, *say*. What then? Does our *Church* teach any thing for doctrine that is not agreeable to the *Scriptures*? This they *never* said. Is not the preserving the *unity* of the *Church*, and the *communion* of *Saints*, a necessary duty? This they will allow. And is there not salvation to be had in our *Church*? They own there is. Do they not then, by separating themselves from her *communion*, withdraw themselves from the acknowledged means of

* John iv. 22.

salvation, to the hazard of their souls?—'Tis to be feared they do.

CAN it then be a crime to look upon such men as *schismatics*, that can thus break off *communion* without any cause for it; or call such men *sinners*, who can thus break the *peace*, and sully the *beauty*, and disturb the *unity* of the Church, in view of so many strong and powerful reasons to the contrary? You will find * our *Saviour* praying with a great deal of ardor and vehemence to his righteous Father, that he *would keep all true believers in unity, that they all may be one* †. And certainly that must be worthy of our endeavours, which our Saviour thought so worthy of his regard, and prayed so *vehemently* and so *fer- vently* for.

THE SUM of the matter is this, — The *catholick Church of CHRIST* is the *whole congregation* or *body of Christian people in the whole world*; who are united to CHRIST as their head, and to one another as fellow members of CHRIST: Now all *Christians* are undoubtedly obliged to join themselves as members of this *catholick Church*, in *communion* with it; and to endeavour after the *peace* and *unity* of it: But there is no way of being in communion with the *catholick Church* but by joining in communion with some *particular Church* that is part of the same; and

* John xvii.

† John xvii. 31.

therefore,

therefore, they that *separate* from such a *particular Church*, that is a *true part* and member of the *universal Church*, do thereby separate themselves from the body of CHRIST, and become guilty of *schism*: From all which the consequence is very clear, that men are not at liberty to form themselves into assemblies and congregations, and *separate* from the established *Church of the land*, and in opposition to it; but that they that do so are guilty of *schism*, to the hazard of their souls.

V. FIFTHLY and lastly, From the case of the *Jews* and *Samaritans*, we may be instructed what sort of *love* and *kindness* we ought to bear, and how we ought to behave ourselves towards those who are of *different opinions and principles* from ourselves. There is not a more melancholic subject, of a *sober* and *serious* person's consideration: There is nothing that is a greater instance of the folly and weakness of *human nature*, than those heats and animosities are, that happen between men, merely for being of *different opinions* and persuasions from each other. Differing thoughts, and differing notions (the more is the pity!) shall be thought by some to be sufficient grounds for denying the *common offices* of *civility* to their neighbour, if not for conceiving an implacable *hatred* against him. Some wreak their *malice* by fixing *odious names* of distinction upon those that are in an interest opposite to them; and others,

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SERM. I.



others, tho' they don't open so loud, yet discover their revenge, by refusing to have any *dealings* with any but those of their *own party*. Now this was exactly the very case of the *Jews* and *Samaritans*, and it is worth our observation, that tho' our *Saviour* condemns only the *Samaritans*, for their *schism* and *separation*, he condemns *them both* for their *uncharitableness* towards each other, on that account; for indeed they were faulty on both sides, and there was such a *mortal hatred* between them as was not to be justified. Thus the *Jews*, in way of reproach, called our *Saviour* a *Samaritan*; they knew that he was not so, but that was one of the worst terms of *contempt* and reproach that they could use, and therefore they called him so: And as liberal as the *Jews* were in their invectives and hatred against the *Samaritans*, *they*, on the other hand, kept pace with them in their spight and malice, and inhospitable behaviour towards them: Thus when our *Saviour* would have entered into a village of the *Samaritans*, they would not receive him, because *his face was as tho' he would go to Jerusalem* *. They took him, 'tis likely, for a *Jew* that was going up to worship at *Jerusalem*, at the feast of the *passover*, and so he was to have no entertainment there. And for the same reason the woman of *Samaria* made a scruple of giving our *Saviour* a little water to quench his thirst.

* Luke ix. 53.

Now

Now our LORD has taught us how contrary all this is to the true spirit of *Christianity*, and how ill it becomes a man, and especially a *Christian*, to be spiteful or malicious upon any account, or to deny any one the common offices of *humanity* and *kindness*, of what country, or sect, or persuasion soever he be; and, that all men are obliged to an universal love and charity, and to extend their mercy and compassion to all mankind.

THUS have I, as I proposed, shewn you how it came pass, that the *Jews* had *no dealings with the Samaritans*, and from thence have shewn you the true nature of *schism*, and how we are bound by the rules of *universal charity* to be kind and courteous, pitiful and compassionate towards all.

AND GOD grant that we may all of us behave ourselves thus; and be conformable therein to the example of our *blessed Lord and Saviour*, who *did good* to all; and while we were yet enemies, *loved us*, and *blessed us*, and *gave himself* for us: To Him with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, three PERSONS and one GOD, be ascribed all honour and praise, the kingdom, the power, and the glory, now and ever. *Amen.*

S E R M O N II.

The NECESSITY of HERESIES in the CHURCH.

I C O R. xi. 19.

For there must be heresies also among you, that they who are approved, may be made manifest among you.

SERMON
II.

THE *Apostle*, in the words immediately foregoing, tells the *Corinthians* of the ill report he had received, concerning the *divisions* that were among them, with relation to the *Lord's supper*. *I hear*, says he, *that there are divisions among you, and I partly believe it*. That is, I do not believe this report of you all, (for I know that a great many of you are good *Christians*, and far from being *schismatics*) but of some of you I do really believe it. And then he adds, — *For there must be heresies also among you*, i. e. 'tis no such incredible thing to me that bad men should raise *divisions* among you, as to matters of outward

ward discipline and worship in the *Church*; for they must proceed further, to set on foot *heresies* also, to corrupt the very *essential* doctrines and *fundamental* articles of religion: But with this advantage however to religion, that these *divisions* and *heresies* will be a means to keep up a plain distinction between *good* and *bad Christians*, and discover the truth and sincerity of their intentions. They who are *approved* will be *made manifest*. From the words in this obvious sense of them I shall discourse upon these following particulars.

SERMON
II.

I. FIRST, Enquire into the grounds and reasons of those *divisions* that are among *Christians*, and how it comes to pass that there are *schisms* and *heresies* in the Church of GOD. The Apostle tells the *Corinthians* that *there must be heresies among them*.

II. SECONDLY, Consider the end and design that GOD has in permitting them: They have this good use, *that they who are approved may be made manifest*.

III. THIRDLY, I shall make a practical observation or two from the whole.

I. FIRST, I'll enquire into the reasons how it comes to pass that there are *schisms* and *heresies* in the *Church* of GOD. The Apostle tells us *there must be heresies*. Now by this phrase we are not to understand an *absolute* and fatal *necessity*, as if GOD by a positive decree had

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II.



ordained *schisms* and *heresies* in the *Church*. This indeed would be a plain reason why they *must* unavoidably be; but then it would make GOD the sole *cause* and author of them: For if *heresy* be the *irresistible decree* of Heaven, 'tis certain that men are in no fault for being *hereticks*; he that made them such *must* answer for their guilt, and they will be found *clear* when they are *judged*. But this be far from GOD; he is too *holy* and too *good* to his creatures to *decree* either the *errors* or the *sins* of men; he *made man at first upright*; and no one is under a necessity of being worse than he was made: So far is it from this, that in all his dealings with men, he has decreed to leave them to a *perfect liberty*, to act upon such *free principles* as become those that have laws to act by, and are *accountable* for the good or evil of their actions. He has *set life and death, good and evil, before them*, and bids them *choose* which they like best; so that their salvation or destruction is plainly *of themselves*, and not from *any necessity* that GOD has laid upon them: But moreover,

As GOD has not made *heresies* in the *Church* *necessary*, by an *absolute decree*, so neither is it his *will* that there should be any; *He is not a GOD that takes pleasure in wickedness*, or that delights to see men bite and devour one another; on the contrary, he has done all that could be done to prevent such things, by strict and frequent commands of *peace* and *unity*, and that

we

we should be all of *one mind* and *one judgment*, and endeavour by all means to *keep the unity of the Spirit*, in *the bond of peace*, and by absolutely forbidding all *strife* and *divisions* and *heresies* among Christians, as things that are directly contrary to the end and design of the *Gospel*, and that *corrupt the faith*, and *disturb the order* and good government of the *Church*, and that are indeed very grievous and damnable sins.

BUT then you'll say, How comes it to be true, what the *Apostle* says, that *there must be heresies*, if it be contrary to GOD's will that there should be any; for *who has resisted*, or can resist, *his will*? Now the answer to this is very plain; and that is, that tho' it is in GOD's *power* to hinder all the sins of men, and it is not *his will* that there should be *heresies*, yet he does not exercise this his *power* and *will* by such positive acts, as to lay an *absolute* restraint upon men, and *force* them into goodness, but in a way agreeable to the condition of human nature, by such motives and arguments as are consistent with the *liberty* of *choice* which he has bestowed upon us.

To *compel* men to *obedience*, and force them to be good whether they will or no, is to take away all the *distinctions* of *good* and *evil*, by destroying the principle of *liberty*, upon the use of which the good or evil of all our actions does depend. And this would be to govern men as brutes are governed, *by necessity*,
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without virtue, without praise, without reward. But GOD having made man a *free agent*, capable of knowing and doing his duty, and having set before him a plain and easy *rule* to walk by, together with all the arguments that are *proper* to determine him in his choice, he has thereby left him *in the hands of his own counsel* which side he will take, that for his obedience, or his disobedience, may be *rewarded* or *punished* accordingly. Now this being the condition of man, with regard to his duty, that he has a *liberty* which he *may abuse*, and is under the influence only of *such laws* and motives as he *can resist*, 'tis plain that, even contrary to the express will and command of GOD, there may be *sin* and *heresies* in the *Church*; and 'tis upon that supposition that St. Paul tells us there *must be heresies*: His meaning is, that considering all the circumstances of human nature, and how prone men are to abuse their liberty, and how ready to neglect their duty, and run into the contrary extremes of sin and folly, 'tis highly probable, (nay almost impossible, but) there *must be heresies* among *Christians*.

HERESIES, as I before hinted, are nothing else but either a gross *corruption* of the pure *faith* and doctrine of the Gospel, or a manifest *addition* to it: And while there are bad men in the world, whilst there are any *vicious appetites* to be indulged, or any *worldly interest* to be served, there will never want *hereticks*.

As

As plain as the rules of the *Gospel* are, men of *perverse minds* will find out ways to evade the force of them. If *religion* thwarts their *base designs*, they will presently set themselves against *religion*, and try some way or other to pervert it, and make it speak fair on their side. Every vice or disorderly passion does naturally tend to produce some *heresy* or other, and we may plainly read in most of the *heresies*, the very vice and passion that first occasioned them; and 'tis much if we don't find some one or more of these sinful passions at the bottom of every *heresy* in the world; *pride*, or *avarice*, or *ambition*, or *self-conceit*, or *malice*, or *licentiousness*; and wherever these are, 'tis no matter how plain and evident the *doctrine* is which they oppose; they can easily set a *bias* upon a man's will, and *bribe* his understanding into a persuasion of the most *absurd opinions* imaginable.

To GIVE a plain instance or two; what unprejudiced person does not see the monstrous absurdity of *transubstantiation*, and what a ridiculous fable that of *purgatory* is, without the least shadow of *Scripture* or *reason* to vouch them? And yet *ambition* and *avarice* have introduced them into the *Church* of *Rome*, as very clear and necessary articles of *religion*. And who that reads the *Bible* with an impartial eye, would ever imagine that he was obliged to *worship saints and angels*, and to *pray to the virgin Mary* more than to our *blessed Saviour* himself? For there is no part of

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Scripture that enjoins this worship; but on the contrary, a great many express places do absolutely forbid it; and yet notwithstanding all this, the same *Church of Rome*, upon the same *worldly* designs, does maintain and justify this *idolatrous practice*; and that with so much confidence, as if the *honours* due to *saints and the virgin Mary* were the subject of every chapter, and every page of the *New Testament*.

AGAIN, Let us see what *pride* and *self-conceit* can do towards making men *hereticks*: The doctrine of the *blessed Trinity*, and our *Saviour's incarnation and satisfaction* for our sins, are, one would think, as plainly delivered in *Scripture* as they can be in any words whatsoever; yet the *Socinian* is too wise in his own conceit to believe one syllable of all this: The great opinion that he has of his own parts and reason, will not let him think that *GOD* can reveal any thing to men, which *HE* is not able fully to *comprehend*; he therefore is resolved, in spite of *Scripture*, to set himself against all *mysteries* in religion: And so *pride* triumphs upon the ruins of faith, because *vain man must needs be wiser than his Maker*. I might be endless in such instances as these; but to bring the matter short, and yet nearer to ourselves; let us but examine the *rise* and *occasion* of the several *sects* and *parties* of those that *separate* from our Church, and we shall find the *Apostle's* character of the last days * exactly ful-

* 2 Tim. iii.

filled in them. In the last days, says he, *perilous times shall come*; for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, unthankful, unholy, false accusers, despisers of those that are good; heady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of GOD; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: For of this sort are they that creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth: Now as Jannes and Jambres [the magicians] withstood Moses, [the true minister of GOD] so do these also resist the truth; men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.

By this very lively, and very applicable description, we see that whatever pretences men may make for their divisions and heresies, there is little or no goodness at the bottom; 'tis the pride and hypocrisy of some, the malice and obstinacy of others, and the unruly lusts and passions of all that first lead them into schisms and heresies. Cunning and designing men first invent them, but 'tis folly and ignorance, and licentiousness, that propagates them, and gives them the vogue among the multitude. In a word, till men can once cease deceiving, and being deceived; till there be an end of all passion, and prejudice, and partiality, we can never expect but that what the Apostle says will be true, that *there must be heresies among*

SERMON Christians. I now pass to another particular,
II. which is

II. SECONDLY, To consider the end and design that GOD has in permitting them: They have this good use, *that they who are approved may be made manifest.*

BY THIS means there may be a plain *difference* made between *good* and *bad* men; between the *true* and *sincere* professors of CHRIST's doctrine and *formal* hypocrites; such as make *religion* only a *cloak* for their *ungodly* designs. It is the TRIAL only that distinguishes things that are *right* and good, from the *base* and counterfeit; without this a man of very vicious inclinations may appear to be *outwardly*, what only a virtuous man really and *inwardly* is; but *temptations* and *trials* shew us the *inside* of things, and make a full discovery of the hearts and affections of men. There are no thanks due that a man is ORTHODOX, whilst all the rest of the world is so too, and he has no opportunity nor *temptation* to be otherwise; but when *heresies* appear, and *make a figure* in the world; when they have got *numbers* and *interest* to recommend them, and pretend to *dispute* it openly and publickly with the *true religion*, then will be plainly seen what men are made of, whether their *faith* be sound and *upright* as it ought to be; whether they heartily love GOD, and good-
ness,

ness, and truth, and can with a good courage reject the wiles and *ensnaring pretences* of wicked and deceitful men; then it will be easily *manifested* to the world, that good men are *really* what they always *pretended* to be; and that a *well-grounded faith* is proof against all *false* notions, and *heretical* opinions whatsoever. *More particularly*, when *heresies* are abroad in the world, and assault good men, their sincerity and steadfastness will shew itself in such like instances as these. As

I. FIRST, IN A HEARTY concern for truth, and an open declaration against those mischievous errors that are set on foot to oppose and undermine it: They will not think it enough to sit still with a *careless* sort of *indifference*, and leave truth to *defend* itself, but *will* be as *active* and as *sollicitous* to *maintain* it, to the best of their skill and power, as the *enemies* of it are to *gain* say and *destroy* it. A truly *sincere Christian* will think himself then obliged to stir most, and put in his helping hand, when goodness and truth are most in danger, and suffer most. You'll see him then, like a busy *mariner* in a storm, labouring might and main to save his *faith* from being *shipwrecked*; and 'tis not the *mean* fear of disobliging *great men*, or a *slavish* regard to his own *ease* and *interest*, that will *bribe* him to *desert* his cause, and sit down in silence, and leave the truth to *take its chance* among its adversaries. We had a very remarkable instance of this within the memo-

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ry of some of us, and which for the honour of our CHURCH ought never to be forgotten. It had been of a long time given out, by the *leaders* among the *Dissenters*, to seduce ignorant people from the *Church*, that our *Church* was far gone in *POPERY*; that our *Bishops* and *Clergy* were *PAPISTS in disguise*; that our *Liturgy* was the *MASS BOOK*; that our *cross in baptism*, and *kneeling at the sacrament*, and *surplice*, and other decent ceremonies, were all *POPISH*: But mark the falshood and hypocrisy of these accusers! When *POPERY* did really begin to shew itself among us; when the *idolatry* and *superstition* of *Rome* was *publickly* professed, and practised, and upheld by our civil governors, so that it became dangerous to oppose it, Did these men then cry out of *Popery*, or any ways endeavour to stop the growth of it? No such matter; they rather encouraged it, and chose to side with it upon all occasions.

THEY were the *MINISTERS* of the *CHURCH OF ENGLAND* that boldly *stood in the gap*, and *ventured all*, in defence of the *PROTESTANT RELIGION*; THEY ONLY then had the courage to *obey GOD rather than men*; THEY ONLY wrote, and preached, and publickly disputed, against the *errors* and *corruptions* of *Rome*, whilst the *PROTESTANT DISSENTERS*, as they called themselves, either had *nothing to say*, or thought it best to sit still and *say nothing*; and so deserted the defence of their *religion*, and gave it over as a prey into the teeth of its *adversaries*.

adversaries. This I say is a plain proof of what the *Apostle* here says, that when heresies gather strength, *they who are approved will be made manifest, and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.* And persons of the lower rank, who are generally *unlearned*, and so led away by the *idle cant* of their teachers, would do well often to consider this, and think with themselves, that those men who cared not, when there was most need to secure them from *heresy*, (the worst of *heresy*, *POPISH superstition* and *idolatry*) will never scruple, for their own *filthy lucre* sake, to lead them into the most dangerous and *destructive* SCHISM.

2. SECONDLY, ANOTHER instance of the sincerity of good men, when *heresies* appear, is, that they will then be both able and willing to give a *reason of the faith that is in them*; and let the world see that their religion is not barely owing to *custom*, and *education*, and *prejudice*; but that 'tis what they have well thought on and considered, and are, upon the most mature deliberation, resolved to *stick by*. And herein they are distinguished from *vain pretenders to religion*, that are wont to make a great noise and bustle about the *orthodox* faith, and after all know not what it is; for such men's zeal being *without knowledge* is at best a very unstable thing, and exposes them to be *tost about with every wind of doctrine*; by the *slight of men*, and *cunning craftiness*, whereby they lie

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in wait to deceive *. But they who have made religion their *business*, and constant study, will be provided with a *principle* that will secure them against all *seducers*. *Heresies* may startle them a little, and so put them upon establishing their *faith* by a more diligent enquiry into the grounds and reasons of it: But the men of no principles, that never had any *inward concern* for truth and goodness; such as put on religion as a *fashion*, and can lay it aside for *their interest*, are they only who become a *prey* upon such occasions.

3. THIRDLY, GOOD and sincere men are *made manifest* by *heresies*, from the very way and method which they take in defending the truth; which is, 1st, by shewing a great deal of *candor* and *charity* to opposers; by allowing for all their prejudices, and endeavouring by all gentle and fair means to convince them of their errors; by letting them see, that it is not any *hatred* or *ill-will* to them, but *love of truth*; not a desire of *victory*, but to *gain a soul*, which is the only design they have upon them. And in this they are plainly distinguished from men of a *bad* design, and that have a *bad* cause to manage. For wherever *falsehood* and *error* is, there must be *passion* to support it; what is wanting of *truth* must be supplied by *rage* and *violence*, and these naturally lead men on to be malicious and uncharitable, to *perse-*

* Eph. iv. 14.

cute and damn all that oppose them. There may be, 'tis likely, some *policy* in such cruelties, but there is no *meekness* of wisdom in it; and St. James * plainly tells us, that this *wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish*.

TRUTH and goodness always act in a quite different manner from this; for the *wisdom which is from above*, as the same *Apostle* tells us, is *first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, (without hypocrisy, without partiality)*. And therefore, *2dly*, The *sincerity* of good men is manifest in their defence of the truth against *error* and *heresy*, in that they will *defend truth only with truth*, (as Mr. Chillingworth speaks) and venture their cause upon its *own* bottom, to stand or fall according to the *innocency* and *evidence* that is in it, for *truth* is always *bold* and *generous*; it is not ashamed nor afraid to appear above board in the open light; there is always a *naked simplicity*, and an *unaffected* air of *goodness* that attends it, and distinguishes it from error and falshood. And men that love the *truth*, are so confident of its strength and power, that they scorn to make use of *tricks* and *lies* to support it. *Lies* only want to be maintained by lies; but 'tis ridiculous folly to *lie* for the *truth*, because *that* stands firmest, and is easiest defended, upon its

* James iii. 15, &c.

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own *native* *innocency*. And there can be no surer sign of a very weak, or a very unjust cause, than to see men use *fraud*, and all the little *arts* of *sophistry* and dissimulation to uphold it. When men make it their chief business to *work* upon the *weakness* and *passions* of their followers, by blinding their eyes with *false* principles, and illogical conclusions, with *spurious* stories for themselves, and *base* calumnies upon their adversaries, 'tis plain that there is very little truth at the bottom, and 'tis a demonstration to a wise man, that such *mens religion is vain*. Indeed 'tis a very plain case to us, that there must be *falsehood* and *hypocrisy* in all this; for *truth* and *honesty* never act on this fashion: Truth is too much a *plain-dealer* to use little *shifts* and disguises, and more a friend to the *Scriptures* than to decline being *tried* by them; and our *Saviour* has instructed us plainly what judgment we are to make of such men; *Men*, says he, *love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil* *.

4. FOURTHLY, WHEN *schisms* and *heresies* break in upon the Church, the *sincerity* of good men will be made *manifest*, in that they will then be more than ordinarily solicitous for the *honour* of *religion*, by endeavouring all they can to put a stop to whatever may give any just occasion of offence, or cause the *enemies of truth* to *blaspheme* and vilify it. It will grieve them to the heart to see the truth suffer only for the sake

* John iii. 19.

of its professors, and that *their sins* and follies should be the only material objection against it; that *schism* and *heresy*, which are only other names for *worldly interest* and *policy*, should pretend to make men better *Christians* than *truth* and *goodness* itself can. This therefore will put them upon reforming what is any ways amiss in themselves or others, and making the *goodness* of their *principles* shew itself in the *purity* of their *practice*, that as they have manifestly the *best cause*, and the most defensible in itself, so they may have the *best lives* also to recommend it to the esteem of others; that so they who are of the *contrary part* may be *ashamed*, *having no evil thing to say of them*.

I COME now, in the last place,

III. THIRDLY, To make a practical observation or two from the whole.

I. FIRST then, From what has been said 'tis evident, that the being of *schisms* and *heresies* in the *Church*, can be no just impeachment of the Wisdom or Goodness of GOD, in the care and government of it; since, as I have shewn, these are none of his doings, nor by his appointment; but are wholly owing to the *unruly lusts* and *passions* of men, whereby they abuse the *liberty* he has bestowed upon them for their good. GOD *made man*, at first, *upright*, *but they have found out many inventions*, says *Solomon* *. He made men *free agents*, to

* Ecclef. vii. 29.

distinguish

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distinguish them from brutes, that they might have the privilege of being *generously* good, and obey their Maker upon *free* principles, out of a *deep sense* of his goodness towards them; but such is *their* base ingratitude, that they abuse this *liberty* into *licentiousness*, and turn the *grace of GOD* into *lasciviousness*. Irregular and sinful desires first make men uneasy under GOD's government, and this puts them upon perverting his laws, and inventing new ways and methods of obeying him, and this lays a foundation for all the *heresies* in the world. For 'tis certain every *bad man* either is, or is prepared to be, a *heretick*, whenever occasion serves, and 'tis for his advantage.

BUT GOD has done all that could be done on his part, to prevent *heresies* in the Church, as he expostulates by the Prophet, * *What could I have done more to my vineyard, that I have not done unto it?* He has *fenced it about* with wholesome laws, laws that carry their own evidence along with them, such as are *holy, just, and good*; and he has appointed *labourers* in it, to dress it and cultivate it; to confirm men in the faith, to administer to them the means of grace, and to warn them against *heresies*, by shewing them the pernicious nature, and damnable consequences of them: He has set before us a plain and easy *rule of faith and manners*, and obliged us to observe it by the strongest argu-

* Isaiah v. 4.

ments that could be drawn from our *hopes* and *fears*, which are the only *proper motives* to work upon *rational* creatures; so that if after all men are *hereticks*, it is only because GOD has left them a power of being so, if they will; for he has given them *no* manner of *encouragement* to be so, but rather the *greatest discouragement* imaginable. If therefore there be *heresies* in the Church, 'tis plainly *an enemy that hath done this*, as our *Saviour* tells us in the *parable of the tares*. The *Devil* takes advantage from the *sloth* and carelessness of some, from the *pride*, and *presumption*, and *licentiousness* of others, to sow *heresies* in the Church.

BUT you will ask, might not the *Scripture* have been made so very clear and plain, as to leave no room at all for *heretical* interpretations? I answer, No; for we see some things in them already, that are as plain as words can make them, which yet are perverted. To give you but one single instance. When our *Saviour* instituted the holy *Sacrament* of his *Body* and *Blood*; we are told by the *Evangelists*, that he said to his *Disciples* expressly upon the delivery of the cup, *Drink yee ALL of this*; and St. *Paul*, who in the *chapter* of the *text* relates the same thing, says, it ought to be so *till the LORD's coming*. And yet we know a Church in the world that has decreed the quite contrary, *viz.* that all are NOT to drink of the cup, but the *Priests* only. By this single instance, I say, 'tis evident, that the plainness of
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Scripture is no *absolute* cure for the *perverseness* of men; but that if they will be *hereticks* they may be so, in spite of the plainest rules and directions to the contrary.

BUT then you will say, tho' GOD has not thought fit absolutely to prevent *heresies* in the Church; yet why does he suffer them to thrive and prosper and *make a figure* in it? For does not this disturb the *unity*, and fully the *beauty* of his Church? Does it not unsettle the weak, and confound the ignorant, and sorely grieve even the very *best Christians*? Is it not a great occasion of scandal to *Heathens*, and matter of sport and pastime to profane *scoffers* and *atheists*, and does it not cause the *enemies* of GOD, of all sorts, to *blaspheme*? Is not the *honour* of religion hereby defaced, and the sacred *mysteries* of it brought into contempt, while Christians thus *play prizes among themselves*; and are at endless differences about the *main* doctrines, and most *fundamental* articles of their faith?

Now these, I confess, are the true and genuine effects of *heresies*, which plainly shews us why *heresy* is a very heinous and *damning* sin. But then in the mean time there are several good uses to which GOD directs them, and which he intends we should make of them: For *bad* things, even the *worst* of all, the *sins* and *folies* of men, may be *well* applied, so as to become tolerable to us. Thus hereby the Church is kept under a constant exercise of *patience*, and *watchfulness*, and *diligence*; the *Scriptures*

are

are better studied ; truth is more highly valued ; wicked men appear in their proper colours ; and error and heresy in its own native ugliness. The pride and ambition of some, and the hypocrisy and base worldly designs of others, are made fully manifest to all men ; good and bad men hereby know themselves and one another better ; the bad are seen to be bad, whilst the good do shine as lights in the world. When folly and heresy break in upon the Church, then will Wisdom be fully justified of all her children. Men that heartily love truth and goodness, will have an ample trial of their faith, and sincerity, and constancy ; They who are approved will be made manifest.

BESIDES, we are to consider, that this world is only a state of probation to good and bad men ; and the Church is compared by our Saviour to a field wherein are both wheat and tares ; and if the tares are not rooted up presently, 'tis not for their own sake, but for the sake of the wheat, lest that also should be rooted up with them. GOD is pleased to let both grow together till the harvest, i. e. the day of judgment, and in the time of harvest he will say to the reapers, i. e. the angels, gather ye together the tares first, and bind them into bundles to burn them ; but gather the wheat into my barn : As we read at large *. And this I think is a sufficient vindication of GOD's providence in this particular.

* Matt. xiii.

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2. SECONDLY, It appears from what has been said, that *schisms* and *heresies* are no just exception against any *particular Church*, where the *true faith* and *doctrine* of the *Gospel* is professed and maintained. For since there must be *heresies* in the world, and since *heresies* owe their rise to the corrupt passions and inclinations of men, it can't reasonably be expected, that any *particular Church* should be altogether exempted from them; for the very best of Churches, in the best and purest ages, even whilst the *Apostles* lived, and preached the *Gospel*, were not wholly secured from *heresies*; and the *Holy Scriptures*, the *rule* and *standard* of faith and manners, always had, and ever will have, enemies to pervert and misinterpret them. In short, while there are bad men in the world, every *particular Church* must expect its share of them. And as long as pride, and hypocrisy, and worldly mindedness and obstinacy, and a *spirit of contradiction* lasts, there will and *must be heresies* among *Christians*.

3. THIRDLY and lastly, Tho' there *must be heresies* among Christians, yet this is no reason at all why they may not be *opposed* and *discouraged* by us, or why the *Church* and *State* may not endeavour by all *Christian* methods, and by *proper laws* and *penalties* to hinder the growth and progress of them; for if vice and profaneness may be lawfully animadverted upon, and punished, then certainly *heresies*, which

are the *natural off-spring* of them, may be so too: For I know of no privilege that *hereticks*, men who *subvert* the *faith*, and fundamentals of *religion*, have to be exempted from *publick censures* more than other men. And this is certain, that we are beholden to good and wholesome *laws*, as well as to the *evidence of truth* itself, that the *Church* is kept in any tolerable good order. For *fear of punishment* restrains men, when nothing else can work upon them, and as much as wicked men are in love with *heresies*, they don't like to propagate them at their own cost, and bear the smart and shame that attends them.

I do not speak this to exasperate governments into *unchristian* methods against *hereticks*; for I am far from thinking that men ought to be persecuted and *dragooned*, and tortured into a better mind; or that every bold *heretick* is forthwith to be cloathed with a garment painted with *furies* and *devils*, and *flung* into the *flames*. No, these are the *inhuman* methods of the *Church of Rome*, and are to be *condemned* and *abhorred* by every good *Christian*. And this is no effectual cure neither for *heresies*. The *heretick* is indeed by this means destroyed, but the *heresy* may still live, and thrive the better for it; for such cruel dealings do naturally incline men in point of pity and compassion to think the better of the *sufferer*. And yet after all something *may* and OUGHT to be done, by way of punishment, against *hereticks*; for neither

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reason nor charity obliges us to think, that profane *Scoffers*, *Deists* and *Socinians*, (such as revile GOD and his holy word, and trample upon the sacred MYSTERIES of our faith) are to be suffered to say and do what they please without controul. There may undoubtedly such laws be made, and penalties annexed, as are proper to curb the insolence and bold presumption of these men, and bring them to a little reason: Such as may at least make them keep their pestilent notions to themselves, and prevent the infection from spreading among others: So that if we can't be wholly free from heresies, we may however be freed from the worst and most pernicious consequences of them. But,

BESIDES this, there are other remedies also against heresies, which are apt to work more effectually, tho' more slowly, upon the minds of all that are not wholly reprobate concerning the faith: And these are, 1. First, That the true faith, as it is in JESUS, be duly preached, and erroneous doctrines plainly confuted from Holy Scripture, that so they who turn away their ears from the truth, and who resist the truth, as the Apostle speaks *, may by degrees be brought into a liking of it. 2. Secondly, That altho' foolish men blaspheme GOD daily, we do pray yet against their wickedness, † if GOD, peradventure, may give them repentance,

* 2 Tim. iv. 4. iii. 8.

† 2 Tim. ii. 25.

to the acknowledging of the truth: Or at least, that the Church may be delivered from the poisonous influence of their pernicious doctrine. 3. And lastly, Since the grand seed-plot of *heresy* is a *corrupt heart* and a wicked life, we ought all of us, both priests and people, high and low, rich and poor together, forthwith set about the *reformation* of our practice, * by *cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit*; that so *heresy* may be crushed in the very bud, and have no foundation at all to build upon: And if the *goodness* of our lives can but once be brought to bear testimony to the *purity* of our faith, this will effectually convince all gainayers, and force them to † *fall down and worship GOD*, and report that *GOD is in us of a truth*.

Now the good GOD grant that we may all of us, in our several stations, endeavour to adorn the doctrine of GOD our Saviour in all things; in the *purity* of our faith, and in the *innocency* of our lives; by adding to * *our faith* virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience; godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity; for if these things be in us, and abound, they will make us that we shall be neither barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord JESUS CHRIST. These will be evident

* 2 Cor. vii. 1.
1, 5, 6, 7, 8.

† 1 Cor. xiv. 25.

‡ 2 Pet.

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proofs of the goodness of the religion we profess, and effectually silence the ignorance of foolish men, whose business it is to propagate *schism* and *heresy* among us. These will in good part manifest our sincerity while we live here, in the midst of this *crooked and perverse generation*, by securing us from all erroneous and wicked practices, and will manifest it much more at the last day, before GOD, angels, and men. When GOD will separate the *sheep* from the *goats*, the *true believers* from *hereticks* and false teachers, and shall pronounce that comfortable sentence upon all that truly love and fear him, saying, * *Come ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

To GOD the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be Glory forever. *Amen.*

* Matt. xxv. 34.

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SERMON III.

The Gospel of CHRIST, how
a Light to the Gentiles.

St. LUKE ii. 32. former Part.

A light to lighten the Gentiles.

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OUR *blessed Saviour* here, as also in several other places of *Scripture*, is called *a light*, with regard to the *doctrine* which he taught; and which is also called *light*, in allusion to that best known and most remarkable property of it, which is, that it *discovers* all things to the sight. And *he* is here particularly called *a light to the Gentiles*, with reference to that extraordinary information in divine and spiritual matters, which the *Gentiles* should receive by his *Gospel*. And what was here foretold, by *Simeon* in the words of *Isaiab*, has been since very eminently fulfilled, in the conversion of the *Gentiles*. For whereas they once *sat in darkness*, and were *strangers to the covenants of promise*, and had no *hope*, and lived as without *GOD* in the world,

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they have since been *enlightened* by the glorious Gospel of CHRIST, to the seeing and acknowledging of the truth. Almighty GOD was pleased to *signify* this his gracious design towards us, frequently by his *Prophets* in the *Old Testament*; and it began to be made good to us immediately upon the birth of our *Saviour*; when the wise men of the East were directed to the object of their worship, by the *leading of a star*. So that as soon as GOD was *manifest in the flesh*, he declared himself to the *Gentiles*; intimating therein this comfortable Truth to Mankind, that the *wall of partition*, that had stood so long between the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, was now to be thrown down: That the *oracles of GOD*, his *covenant* and his *promises*, were no longer to be confined to the People of the *Jews*; but that *all* the nations of the world should have the *blessings of a Saviour*. That *he* should be a *light to lighten the Gentiles*, as well as be the *glory of the people Israel*. And in what instances he has accomplished this prophecy of the text, it is my design particularly to shew.

I. AND FIRST, The *first instance* of a divine and spiritual truth, that is well known by us, but of which we should have been greatly ignorant, without the *light* of the Gospel is, that there is a GOD, the *Creator and Governor of all things*: The groundwork of all knowledge, and the foundation of all truth, and *all religion*, must be laid in the *belief* of a
GOD;

GOD; by which, I mean, not only the being persuaded *barely*, that there is a *supreme being*, but the likewise having just and worthy notions of his *nature* and *attributes*. For he that believes unworthy things of GOD, does so far deny his Being, and the worship that he pays him will be so far from being a *reasonable service*, that it will be no other than a vain absurd *superstition*. Now if we will judge of our own case, either by the case of the *Gentile world*, before the publishing of the *Gospel*, or by the case of the present nations that know nothing of the *Gospel*, we shall have reason to think, that as necessary as this truth is, and as much as we know of it now, we should have been at a sad loss about it, were it not for that *light* which the *Son of GOD* has given us by the *Gospel*. 'Tis true indeed, the *Heathens* of all ages, both before and since our *Saviour*, must be allowed not to have doubted of the *being* of a GOD; and 'tis certain they acknowledged him to be the *Creator* of the world: But they had withal very *gross* and very *absurd* conceptions of him. They had no true notion of his spirituality; and for that reason made *material* representations of him, and looked upon him as one who was liable to human passions and infirmities. And tho' they acknowledged his *power* and *might*, and on that account had the utmost fear and *dread* of him, yet they had no right opinion of the *goodness* and *benevolence* of his nature; but they rather thought him *vengeful*, and

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cruel, and that he delighted in *barbarous* and *horrid sacrifices*. Now such notions as these, that have been always so common among those who were strangers to the *Gospel* of *JESUS*, must necessarily destroy all *true religion* among them, and turn it into a *base* and *slavish superstition*, at least; if it did not likewise produce *acts of cruelty*. It must be confessed indeed, that such notions as these are, can be the result of very gross and absurd reasonings only; but then it must be remembered, that *gross* reasoners make up the bulk of mankind; and therefore, if we enquire into the thoughts of the *generality* of men, we must not wonder if we find them groundless and absurd. Nay, even the *most thinking men* of the *Gentile world*, before our Saviour's time, were observed not to be so just in their thoughts about this *great truth*, as they ought to have been. For tho' tis allowed, that most of them did agree, in acknowledging one *supreme God*, *the Father of Gods and men*, yet we don't find that they looked upon their *GREAT GOD* to be so infinitely above all their *other Gods*, in authority and power, as to deserve the *sole* and *entire* worship of mankind; but they vainly imagined, that there were great numbers of inferior beings, *tutelar Gods*, that ought to have *temples* erected to them, and *sacrifices* offered; as being persons to whom men were much beholden; and on whom they depended for *help* and *protection*. Now tho' I can well enough believe,

believe, that this *Gentile practice* of worshipping so many *inferior Gods*, was occasioned by a mistake that men run into, about the meaning of a *tradition* which, in all likelihood, was spread over the world from *Noah* and his *off-spring*, to wit, that *GOD* was to be worshipped in hopes of a *MEDIATOR* to come; and tho' I can likewise easily persuade myself, that the finest wits and reasoners among them, did indeed worship their several *country Gods*, under the notion of *MEDIATORS* and *INTERCESSORS*, yet that this was not a *general* notion among them, seems plain, from the profound silence of the *Greek* and *Latin Gentile* writers in this matter; and likewise, from that *indiscriminate* worship which they paid to their several Gods, without any intimation given, that they thought them not *essentially* qualified to help and do good to all their *votaries*.

Now this was an error in *fundamentals*; it was a *scandalous* mistake, and such as affected the whole *scheme* of the *Pagan religion*, and made it absurd and ridiculous: Because it diminished the authority, and dignity, and majesty, of that *truly supreme Being*, who alone is infinite in power and goodness, and who, for that reason, exclusive of all others, has *alone* the title to *adoration* and *worship*.

AND now, if we turn our eyes from those that have known nothing of the *Gospel*, to those who have been blessed with the knowledge

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ledge of it, then we shall see how eminently our Saviour has been *a light to the Gentiles*, even in this most *fundamental* of all truths, in this the most *plain article* of all religion. For we are guarded by the *light* of the Gospel against these dangerous errors concerning the nature of GOD, by having every thing to be believed concerning the GREAT GOD, laid down before us in the plainest terms: Thence we have learnt, that * *he is a spirit*; and that *he is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth*; that he is a † *GOD of patience and consolation*; that he is better pleased with ‡ *mercy* than with *sacrifice*; that every || *good and perfect gift comes from him the Father of lights*: That he is the § *only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and who only hath immortality*; and that therefore the devotions of his creatures should be all applied to him. — And not to beings that by nature are no Gods †.

II. BUT — SECONDLY, The *immortality* of the *soul*, and the *certainty* of a future state of *rewards* and *punishments*, is another main *article* of spiritual knowledge; and so necessary to be believed, that without it, it will be impossible to preserve the very being of *religion* in the world. And yet this was an *article* concerning which the *Heathens* had but obscure

* John iv. 24. † Rom. xv. 5. ‡ Matt. ix. 13.
|| James i. 17. § 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16. † Matt. iv. 10.

notices. 'Tis not denied but the doctrine of a **SERMON**
future state was believed by very many in all na- **III.**
 tions; and this shews the *reasonableness* of the
 doctrine, and that it was in all probability
 spread through the world, by being handed
 down, by the *sons of Noah*, and their *descen-*
dants; but it does *no way* appear, that the
Gentile world before our *Saviour* was under
 any fixed settled conviction of the *truth* and
certainty of it. Its coming down to them by
 an immemorial *tradition*, from those their an-
 cestors, of whom in a while they knew no-
 thing, was far from being an argument for a
strong belief of it; and tho' the *reasonable-*
ness of the *doctrine* might raise their hopes of
 its being a *true* one, yet it would not give
 them an *absolute certainty* about it. Not but
 that the great and learned men among them
 had some notion of the *spiritual* nature of
 their souls, and of their *immortality*, and sub-
 sistence in a *future state*, of *rewards* and *pu-*
nishments; it must be owned, that they had
 some kind of *belief* of these things, and ac-
 cording to the light that they had, would ar-
 gue very *shrewdly* about it: But the defect
 was, that they were only *probable* arguments
 that they used; and such as did not *absolutely*
 prove the point they were used for; and so
 could only serve to *raise* in them some *hopes*
 of their *immortality*, but were not sufficient to
 take off their *scruples*, nor give them compleat
security in their expectations. Nay, it must
 be

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be confest farther, that the *immortality* of the *soul*, and a *future state*, was the belief, and the expectation of *all nations* whatsoever: Which happened, I suppose, from the notion's being at first spread through all the parts of the world, upon the *dispersion*; but then, being received as a *tradition* only, without a *demonstrative* proof of the *certainty* of it, it was not likely to enter so deep into men's minds, as to become the *governing principle* of their actions, and to *influence their practice*. It must have appeared *undeniably true*, from the *nature* of the *thing itself*, to have had such an effect as this upon them sufficiently.

BUT indeed that they were not able to make out the truth of it in this manner, we may easily conceive, from the very arguments themselves, which were made use of for the proof of it: Which we shall find to have been such as left large room for an *inquisitive mind* to remain still *doubtful* about it. 1. The *spiritual* nature of the *soul* was one main argument among them, and they reckoned it a very good one: And yet this does not absolutely prove its *immortality*, if we suppose that GOD has a power over his creatures, and that he may dispose of them at his pleasure. 'Tis true indeed, if our souls are *in their own nature immaterial*, they are then capable *in their own nature* of *surviving* the body; because the corruption or dissolution of a *body* that is *material*, does not infer the destruction of a *soul* which is of a different nature,

ture, and which may not stand in need of a *corporeal* instrument to exert its operations by: But then, whether it be the *will* of GOD that every thing shall always continue to act, so long as it is *in its own nature* capable of acting, this is what we can't possibly come to any certain knowledge of, but by an *express revelation* from GOD about it.

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2. AGAIN, That *desire* of *immortality* which is firmly rooted in our nature, is another *argument* from which the *Gentile world* might ground good hopes of their *souls* being *immortal*: Because they might think it was not reasonable to suppose, that GOD would furnish men with strong and vehement desires after that which he never intended should, under any conditions, be enjoyed. But whether this *desire* of *immortality* be really a distinct thing, from the desire of *self-preservation*, (which is a very necessary and useful principle, tho' men's *souls* were *mortal*) this is what pure nature will find great difficulty to resolve. Still farther,

3. THE *unequal distribution* of good and evil in this life, with regard to the *merits* and *demerits* of men, this is another *topick* which the wisdom of the *Gentile world* made use of, to prove a *future state* by; and tho' this be an exceeding good *moral* argument of the great *probability* of such a state, when all these *irregularities* will be *adjusted*; yet it is such an argument as there were not many that could make observations enough upon the *dispensations* of

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of Providence, as to be able to see the force of it : And those who were the most accurate in these computations, would observe, that virtue and vice did, in the main, find different treatment in this world ; and that each has its natural rewards and punishments almost always attending it, or immediately following it ; and they would be seldom able to know certainly, that men did not meet with *that usage* which they deserve ; unless they could discern the hearts of men, and be sure that every thing that has the face of virtue, does really proceed from a good and honest principle : And that those who enjoy great affluence of this world's goods, and yet are scandalously wicked, do withal enjoy that easiness and satisfaction of mind, in which alone true happiness does consist ; which is not pretended.

FAR be it from me, in what I am now saying, to design to render these arguments impertinent ; I only infer, from the scruples that may be raised about them, how uncertain the best men, and the nicest reasoners among the Heathens, must have been in this point, of the immortality of the soul, from these arguments, in comparison of those grounds that we go upon, who fetch our Proofs of it, from the revelation in the Gospel. I own that these arguments were sufficient to make them conceive large hopes that there is a future state of immortality : But I must say withal, that they fall vastly short of proving it in such a manner

as to leave no room for doubts or disputes about the certainty of it; and therefore whatever influence they might have had, (and a great influence indeed they ought to have had) upon the sober and thinking part of the world, yet, I fear, they would have no mighty power to move or affect the generality of men, in such manner as to put them upon the ungrateful task of mortifying their lusts, and denying their vicious inclinations. *Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die*, was a known maxim of the Epicureans, and there would have been nothing unreasonable in this their conclusion, if what they built it upon had been true: Namely, that *Death put an end to their beings for ever*.

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So that it was mighty odds on the side of passion and appetite, against all the grave reasonings of the Philosophers, when, tho' we should suppose the common people willing to attend their lectures, and capable of taking the force of their arguments; yet, the most that could be offered for their conviction, would amount to no more than that it was possible that Death might not put the LAST end to their being. If such an imperfect account of the matter, as this was, could have been any alarm to them for the present, and have awakened them into any care of themselves, their care would not have lasted long: For what appeared to them at first to be at the most but probable, they would soon suggest to themselves might be false; and this

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doubt improved and heightened by the *bias* of corrupted nature, and the alluring temptations of sin, would soon grow up to a firm persuasion that it *really* was false.

THUS weak and uncertain were the reasonings of the very wisest *Heathens*, about this *great* and *momentous truth*; and if there be any of our *modern Deists* that have a better opinion of them in this point, I desire they would consider the grounds which those two most celebrated *philosophers* of the *Gentile* world, *Socrates* and *Tully*, and who were withal the most sincere well-wishers to this truth of the soul's *immortality*, I say, I would desire them to consider what grounds even those men went upon, for their belief of it.

SOCRATES indeed has said many fine things about it, and gives several very lucky and surprizing hints, for its being true; and which must be allowed by all men to carry the *face* and appearance of *reasoning*, and probability. But if you thoroughly weigh and examine the arguments, you will find *most* of them foreign, *few* of them strictly pertinent, *none* of them fully conclusive. And it would even move one's pity, to see the poor *willing Philosopher*, quite bewildred in his arguments, and all at a loss for a *probable* conclusion, when yet he was labouring at *demonstration*. And he himself was *sensible* of this; and therefore, after all the pleasure he seems to have taken in reflecting upon the future glories, which he had

had some expectation of, and after so many lectures as he had made, in proof of the truth of what he was so desirous of, he at last fully discovers a distrust of his own reasonings; and at the same time that he expresses the greatest goodwill imaginable, to the point he maintains, he discovers a mighty diffidence and fear, lest, after all, these his hopes should be disappointed.

THE other, Tully, had all the light which Socrates's learning could afford; and he was blessed with a vast genius, and a most excellent judgment, whereby, if any mere man ever was, he seemed qualified to have made such an improvement of the hints, which the other Philosopher had given him, as to have brought the matter to a clear and final decision: He had the same eagerness of desire too that the other had, of making out the important point; yet, after all, we find him not only fearing the worst, and questioning his own arguments, but even retracting his belief of it. Thus, * speaking of Plato's *Phædo*, in which there is an account of his master Socrates's sentiments, of the soul's immortality, and of his arguments for it; *I don't know how it is, says he, but whilst I am reading this book I assent to the doctrine of it; but when I lay the book down, and begin to meditate by myself, upon the immortality of human souls, the assent before given quite vanishes. Nescio quomodo*

* Tusc. quæst. lib. i.

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dum lego assentior, cum posui librum & mecum ipse de immortalitate animorum cæpi cogitare, assensio omnis illa elabitur. There are many instances, in other men, which I might produce, to shew you in what a *doubtfulness* the whole *Heathen world* was, concerning this truth: But the Examples which I have produced already, make the addition of any more needless: For if these *two great men* before mentioned, who do so deservedly challenge the first place among the *Philosophers*, were yet uncertain about it, it will not be strange if others, of a lower *class*, had hardly any settled notions of it at all.

THUS insufficient was the *wisdom* of the *Gentile world* to bring men to any absolute certainty of the *immortality* of the *soul*, and a future state of *rewards* and *punishments*; and so it must have continued to this day, if the *defect* of *human wisdom* had not been *supplied* by that *wisdom* which is *from above*. But the Gospel of CHRIST has cleared up all *doubts* and *difficulties*, and removed all *just scruples* concerning this truth. We have there a *demonstrative* certainty of the point; and the *arguments* for it are as *easy* as they are *strong*; Suited to the *meanest* capacity, and level with the most common understanding. For now the doctrine of the *immortality* of the *soul* is not a point of greater importance to us to be true, than it is certain to be so, even from the mouth of the *Lord of life and glory*. For,

as he has brought life and immortality to light through his Gospel, so he has assured us, both of the future existence of our souls, and a reunion of them with their respective bodies at the *Resurrection*; and that GOD will moreover upon an appointed day, * *judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained*; and of this has given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead: They tell us farther, that GOD will in the after state reward every man according to his works, having promised † *eternal life to all them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality*; and threatned indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish to all such as obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness.

AND as this doctrine of rewards and punishments is the chief motive to all religion, because it works strongest upon our hopes and fears, which are the main spring and principle of action, so it is to be observed, that all these things are not mentioned *slightly*, or transiently, but they are often insisted on, and laid down in the plainest terms that are possible: In-
somuch that the very circumstances of the last dreadful day of judgment, and the solemn pomp of it, together with the form and manner of the trial, and the very words of the sentence of condemnation, and of acquittal, are declared by our Saviour: to which he at last adds an account of the final

* Acts xvii. 31.

† Rom. ii. 7, 8, 9.

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issue of things, in these express words, These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal. But*

III. THIRDLY, Another instance of a *divine truth*, now well known and believed by us, but which we should have been intirely ignorant of, were it not for the *light* of the *Gospel*, is this; that *Almighty GOD* has provided a means by which his just displeasure against the sins of mankind, is appeased and *satisfied*. This is certainly another very important point of knowledge; because, without a belief of it, 'tis not conceivable how a sinner should ever apply himself to *GOD* for pardon, with any hopes of success. Because, tho' *repentance* is the least thing that a man can do for the obtaining of the pardon of his sins, yet there is so much *shame* and *sorrow*, so much *uneasiness* and *anguish* of spirit, that must attend *true* repentance, that 'tis much to be feared, that few would ever set themselves heartily to such a painful task, much less go through with it, unless they *knew assuredly* that they might hereby secure their pardon. But alas! this is a piece of knowledge not to be attained to, but by *assistance* from heaven. For tho' some among the *Gentiles* did entertain a *faint hope*, that a *sincere repentance* might be the happy means of recovering *GOD's* favour, yet a doubt did still remain upon their

* Matt. xxv. ult.

mind,

mind, lest, after all, this might not be sufficient; and that there still wanted a formal *atonement for sin*, without which *offended justice* would not be appeased. For *ignorant* as they were, they yet *knew* that every sin was a transgression of a plain law, unalterably fixed by GOD, to be the rule of human actions; and upon this account they thought that there was something more than repentance required, in a case where the *honour* of GOD had been insulted, and his laws trampled upon. Accordingly they imagined that *sacrifices* were proper attendants upon repentance: But then they had but little confidence that such expedients could be of true efficacy. For how could they with any good reason have satisfied themselves, that this could prove a just security to GOD's honour, and a due vindication of his laws? Yet this is the sad and deplorable state of darkness, that men must be in who have not the *light* of the *Gospel*; And of this some of the *Heathens* were themselves sensible, and accordingly lamented their condition, and expressed their *hopes*, that GOD would at some time or other favour them with a *particular revelation* of his will, in this and some other important articles in religion.

Now what they *inquired* after, and *wished for*, has been since, to the *infinite benefit* of mankind, brought to light by our Saviour's *Gospel*: By THIS we know, not only that GOD is ready and willing to receive true penitents to fa-

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your, but likewise the means by which he is become so graciously inclined towards us; to wit, through the *awful* and *astonishing sacrifice* of his *own Son* in our *flesh*. That he being GOD and *man* did, by his death for man, MERIT the forgiveness of sin; and did abundantly SATISFY GOD's *justice*, and restore man to the peace of GOD; by making such an *expiation* for him, that he may now, tho' still a sinner, * *come boldly to the throne of grace*; and be sure of *obtaining mercy*, and of *finding grace to help in time of need*.

AND now, I hope, we may allow this for a THIRD instance, in which CHRIST has been a *light to the Gentiles*; an instance of such a piece of *knowledge* laid before us, as we can never enough praise and adore GOD for, not only upon account of the advantage that we receive, from that *satisfaction* which CHRIST has made by his death; but likewise, upon the account of that *inward peace* and comfort, that must go along with the knowledge or belief of it. For *guilt* is always *fearful* and *timorous*, a *load* and burden upon the mind; ever pressing down the soul with distrust and anguish, continually *alarming* it with apprehensions of *judgment* and *vengeance*: And how would it have added to the weight of *this load*, to have felt the burden, and not to have known how it could be removed? What a

* Heb. iv. 16.

mighty consolation then must it be to a man, to see the assured means of his delivery from it, as he now may by the *light* of the *Gospel*? For this is indeed such a piece of knowledge, as in *Scripture* phrase, will *enlighten the eyes*, and *rejoice the heart*; and is *more precious than rubies*. For 'tis to know that we are really delivered from the wrath of GOD; and that our sins will now be *infalli-*
bly forgiven upon a Gospel repentance: 'Tis to know how we may obtain pardon, and by what safe hands 'tis conveyed to us: And this is a kind of knowledge that plucks out the *sting of death*, takes away all smart of a *wounded Conscience*, and gives life and spirit to a man's endeavours, by giving him an *assurance* of success; and so, at the same time that it furnishes him with a reason for his *thankfulness* to the author of it, it affords him true peace and serenity of mind in the performing this and every other act of Religion.

I MUST defer what remains of this discourse to another opportunity. Now to GOD the FATHER, GOD the SON, and GOD the HOLY GHOST be ascribed, as is most due, all honour and glory now and for ever. *Amen.*

S E R M O N IV.

The Gospel of CHRIST, how
a Light to the Gentiles.

St. LUKE ii. 32. former Part.

A light to lighten the Gentiles.

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IN a late discourse to you from these words, in order to shew the defects and insufficiency of human reason, and the importance and necessity of divine revelation, for a full discovery of spiritual truths, I undertook to shew in diverse instances, how our Saviour is indeed *a light to lighten the Gentiles*, as it is in the text prophesied that he should be. — I did then shew it in *three* several instances, and I now propose to compleat my design, by shewing the same in several more. I proceed therefore to a *fourth*.

IV. ANOTHER INSTANCE of divine and useful knowledge which we have by the *light* of the *Gospel*, is, the knowledge of the way in which

which GOD may be worshipped acceptably. SERMON

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This is certainly another important piece of knowledge, communicated to us by the Gospel. That GOD is to be worshipped, common sense and reason would have told us, without revelation; but by what outward forms our worship of him should be attended, this we could not readily have fixed upon: Because we should have had no grounds of assurance that what we might fix upon would have been acceptable. And in this distraction of thought should have complied, without reserve, with all those ridiculous and absurd ceremonies of worship, which custom and common usage had stamped an AUTHORITY upon: And should at last, in despair of any certainty concerning the mind of GOD in this matter, have fallen in with the rule of continuing the usual ceremonies, lustrations, and sacrifices, to those Gods which the laws had fixed for the objects of their worship, according to Tully's maxim,—* *Fam illud ex institutis pontificum & aruspicum non mutandum est, quibus hostiis immolandum, cuique DEO.*

— Now this is another instance of a lamentable ignorance, from which the light of the Gospel has set us free. We are therein plainly taught how we are to make our addresses to GOD, and that they must be made to him, in the name, and in confidence of the merits, and intercession of our blessed Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, and become

* Tull. de legibus, Lib. 2.

assured,

assured, that whatsoever we THUS ask, we shall receive.

AND lest we should be left in any uncertainties, about the *rites of worship*, our Saviour has been pleased to appoint two, as of *general* necessity to be observed, so of the greatest use and *advantage* to mankind, that can possibly be thought of, or desired; and those are the *sacraments of baptism* and the *LORD's supper*: By the means of the *first* of these we are admitted into *covenant* with GOD; when not only our past sins are *remitted*, but strength and power is *covenanted* to be given, to enable us to continue steadfast to our engagements, and to persevere in that *faith* and *obedience* to which the *promise* of life and glory is annexed.

By the means of the other *sacrament*, the *communicants* are admitted to *renew* that *first covenant*, which by their sins *they* have shamefully *broken*: Whereby those their sins are *then* mercifully forgiven, and the *graces of GOD's HOLY SPIRIT* are plentifully conferred; both to *excite* us to proceed in our duty, and to *enable* us to discharge it. Oh! how would the *wise* and *conscientious* men among the *Heathens* have *exulted* and *triumphed*! How would their hearts have leaped for joy, if they had had the *lines* of their *duty* so plainly drawn! If they had had a *rule* for their *worship* of GOD propounded to them in such clear and *legible characters*!

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Who then can describe the folly of *those Christians*, who can sufficiently lament their sad condition, who will neglect and despise this rule and method of *Christian worship*, even after they know it to be prescribed to them from heaven?

V. FIFTHLY, *another instance* of divine and spiritual knowledge, which we have by the *light* of the *Gospel*, is this: We know not only that our *natures* are *corrupt*; but we know moreover, *how they became so*, and what are the *proper means* for the cure of the malady.

THERE is no man, but from his own *experience*, may be sadly sensible, that his *nature* is *depraved*; yet, neither his own *experience*, nor his own bare reason, will ever be able to acquaint him how it became so; nor direct him to the true and proper remedies for the cure thereof. And the want of this must needs have been a great discouragement to the *Heathens*; a mighty check to their endeavours after *virtue* and holiness: For when they perceived a *law in their members*, always *warring against the law of their minds*; and that when they desired to do good, then *evil was present with them*—This must naturally make them fall into *listlessness* and *indifference*, about doing what tho' they thought to be their duty, they yet found very difficult and troublesome to discharge; and accordingly, many among the old *Heathens* run into that *extravagant fancy*

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fancy of a *fatality* in all things; and that men might *even* as well fit down contentedly under the *tyranny* of their *lusts*, as endeavour to controul them, since that could be to no purpose, if all things came to pass by the irresistible decrees of *relentless fate*.

BUT the *light* of the Gospel has happily put an end to all these *perplexities*: We being from thence not only acquainted with the *cause* of our *malady*; but likewise furnished with a *remedy* for it too. Our *Saviour* has been a *light* to enlighten us in these respects, both by setting us a *pattern* of *holiness* and *purity*, in his own example, and also by acquainting us with the assistances of a holy and eternal *Spirit* which he has procured for us, to dispose us to think and act like *men*, and like *Christians*. So that now we know that there is no reason to despair of performing such a service as will be acceptable to GOD: For tho' we can do nothing ourselves, as of ourselves, because our *sufficiency* is of GOD*: Yet, notwithstanding this, we are sure, that † we can do all things, through CHRIST which strengthens us, with the graces of his HOLY SPIRIT.

WE have therefore now no need to fear lest *temptations* should be too *powerful* for us, provided we set ourselves against them, and implore the *divine assistance*, in a devout and becoming manner: Nay, we may be sure that ‡ no temptation can take us, but such as is

* 2 Cor. iii. 5. † Philipp. iv. 13. ‡ 1 Cor. x. 13.

common

common to man, such as may be supported by human nature, so assisted; because GOD has promised, that he will, with the temptation, make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.

VI. SIXTHLY, One instance more of *divine and useful knowledge*, which we enjoy by the *light of the Gospel*, and which we should, otherwise, have been ignorant of, is, that we are thereby made acquainted with a full and compleat *system of morality*; or a true *scheme* of all the several laws of *sobriety*, and *righteousness*, and *piety*. For tho' these are such laws as are originally *engraven* by GOD on men's *hearts*, and their *consciences* do naturally *accuse* or *excuse* them, as they do either *obey* or *transgress* them; yet it is plain, that there are many of those laws that, through the *fall of man*, are so overwhelmed and buried in the *corruption* and ruins of our *nature*, that we should have never known our obligations to practise them, nor the *usefulness* of our *practice* of them to our happiness, but by the *light of the Gospel*.

FOR although there were some among the *Heathens*, who laid out a great deal of commendable pains and labour, in studying the moral law; yet, for want of that light we now have, they were never able to trace out all the several *lines* of their *duty*, nor did they extend them to their *due* and *just length*. Among

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mong all the volumes that were written antiently by the *Heathens* on this subject, we find they never once thought of *universal charity* as a *moral duty*; and consequently, had no notion of the *duties of forbearance, forgiving of injuries, or of doing good to, and praying for our enemies.* Neither did they ever guard against the *appearances* of evil; nor lay down any rules for the *governing of the thoughts*, or for restraining the *inward inclinations*, to sin. And yet these are all acts of *moral duty*, and of *eternal* and necessary obligation; but 'tis the *light* of the *Gospel* only that has plainly discovered them to be duties. That indeed has given us full directions and precepts about them; and our blessed LORD's *sermon upon the mount* is, in particular, so complete a *system of morality*, and is laid down in so plain and *expressive* a manner, that almost every one may now be his own *casuist*, and there needs but little besides an honest heart, for any one to *know* his *duty* from it.

VII. SEVENTHLY and lastly, As all the other articles and principles that I have insisted upon, are *necessarily* to be *believed* and owned, in order to a *religious life*; so it is likewise necessary, that men should have the *importance* and necessity of all *these truths* laid before them, by such persons as they believe to have *authority* to teach and instruct them therein.

I. ANY

I. ANY THING *new* and *strange* is wont to *alarm* the *unthinking multitude*, and make them jealous of some secret designs upon their liberty : *A long received custom* will at last become *sacred* with them ; and how absurd soever or impious it may be, men have usually so good an opinion of their own judgments, that they will be as *tenacious* of it, as the best Philosopher can be of the most *confirmed* truth ; so that any one that would go about to dispossess them of their *prejudices*, must not only come armed with very *familiar*, and very *plain* arguments, but his arguments must be backed with such an *authority* of person, that may *command* their *attention*, and influence their belief. Otherwise his *instructions* will be but as *chaff* before the wind ; and the most ignorant among them will be ready, with derision *pertly* to enquire, as the *Philosophers* did of St. Paul, *What will this babler say ?* And their *zeal* for opinions which they have been so long accustomed to, especially if they relate to things *sacred* and *religious*, would soon *boil up* into *rage* and *fury* ; so that, *away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live*, would be the first decision they would make in the matter. This the excellent *Socrates* had sad experience of, which struck such a terror into the other *Philosophers*, that we don't read of any who afterwards attempted to free the world from their *superstitious errors* ; there being no other, it seems, who had
courage

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courage and constancy enough to die a martyr to his belief and expectations. But still farther.

2. AN *authority of person*, asserted by some *awakening sign*, by something *prodigious* and *amazing*, seems to have been necessary for them who would have endeavoured to bring the *Gentile* world to a true sense of *religious* matters; upon the account of the *beedless* and *inconsiderate* nature which is in much the *greatest part* of mankind. *Very few* can frame themselves to think *abstractedly* of things; their thoughts are for the most part confined within the *narrow limits* of *sense*; And even of those who anciently pretended to *philosophy*, there were not many who were willing to undergo the *fatigue* of *close thinking*, or to wait the *slow* and *gradual* approaches of light and *truth*: There is indeed a wonderful and *inexpressible* pleasure, in the discovery of *things remote from sense*: But *they* only are sensible of it, who by long use, and much pains, have made the way *easy* and familiar to them: Others will be contented to *take things upon trust*; and had rather sit down in the quiet possession of an *error*, than be at the expence of so much *wearisom labour* of the mind as is necessary to *confute* it.

BUT this *thoughtlessness* of mankind; would not be the only hindrance to any good effect, from a grave *lecture* of *philosophy*; the *exorbitant passions*, the *vicious habits*, and *inveterate*

rate prejudices of men, would be far more stubborn and sturdy obstacles against men's attending to, and receiving *the truth*; these indeed are such things, as nothing but *assistance from heaven* seems capable of removing. For, whoever has the *authority* of his *reason* usurpt by his *vicious affections* and inclinations, is *so far* sunk down to the *level of brutes*, that *have no understanding*; he is moved by a *like necessity* with them, and is *almost* as incapable of arguing about *religious* and *spiritual* matters as they are. But when *natural appetites* have so long had their *full liberty*, as to grow to a *custom* and *habit*, then the difficulty is still greater to recover men so *fettered*, to any sense of themselves or their duty.

'Tis a matter of such *mighty difficulty* for a man to *reform* after he is *hardned* and *grown old* in a perverse custom, that the Spirit of GOD resembles it to a *natural impossibility*. * *Can the Æthiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his spots?* then may ye also do good, who are *accustomed to do evil*. The force of *custom*, even in things *indifferent*, is well known; and how it begets a facility and *proneness* towards action. But a *vicious custom* or *habit* is still more easily attained to; and when attained, is more *stubborn* and *refractory*: For, besides, what is common to all *habits*, this is *singular* in *vicious* ones, that they fall in with the *bent* and *pro-*

Jer. xiii. 23.

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*pen*sion of our natures, they *sooth* those *appetites*, which we have always a *will* to gratify, and conspire with those *lusts* and *passions* which we are *seldom* able to controul.

BUT the *Gentile* world was still farther incapable of being corrected, because of those stiff *prejudices* which they were possessed with, and confirmed in: For they were no sooner come into the world, but they were strait infected with the *corrupt* and *perverse opinions* of it: error was suck'd in with their mother's milk, and every day added to the force, as well as number of their mistakes; so that by the time that they should have come to a *maturity* of reason, and *ripeness* of judgment, their very *natural* notions were stifled with *acquired* follies.

Now in such a case, besides the *difficulty* of discerning and distinguishing the *truth* from those *errors* they had so long entertain'd; besides this, I say, there were very few would so much distrust themselves, or *undervalue* their *parts*, as to discard what so long a belief had *stamp'd* an authority upon.

AND now, what effect can it be imagined, that the *abstracted speculations* of the *philosophers* could have had, upon a world thus bound, and led captive by *passion* and *prejudice*? What would the most *rational* account of GOD and their duty have signified to people thus *accustomed* to wickedness, and *grown old* and *stiff* in iniquity and error; unless the persons who undertook to teach and instruct them, had

first come with *such an authority* as would make men *attentive* to them; and then had attested their doctrines and rules of living, with plain and *sensible*, and in a manner with *irresistible* proofs of the truth and *certainty* of them? This is what was wanting among the *philosophers* of the *Gentile world*; and thereby they were altogether *insufficient* for the instruction and reformation of mankind. But this defect was fully and completely provided against, and supply'd in the publication of the *Gospel*, by the *miracles* that were wrought by the *Apostles* and *first* preachers of it.

Miracles do naturally bespeak an *authority* in the person who does them, and awaken the *attention* of those who see them done: At the same time that they are also a *demonstration* of the truths which they are brought to support. They are indeed equally *adapted* to men of all conditions and capacities; they are an argument plain and *obvious* to the most *ignorant*, and sufficient to satisfy the *wisest*, and to stop the mouth of the most *captious* and gain saying: These were the *Apostles credentials* to the world, and by these *they* notify'd their *commission* from Heaven: This presently quieted men's passions, and made them *attentive* and ready to hear; and then the plainness of the doctrine thus proved true by the *demonstration of the Spirit*, removed their *prejudices*, and overpowered their *vicious habits*, and made them thoroughly sensible that what was delivered by the *Apostles*,

SERMON was the *power of GOD* and the *wisdom of*
 IV. *GOD*, and the true doctrine of *life and sal-*
 vation.

I HAVE now gone through with what I proposed from the text. I shall conclude the whole with the following inferences.

I. FIRST, If it be so, that the *Gentiles*, notwithstanding their great pretences to light and knowledge, were *shamefully ignorant* of a great many necessary *fundamental truths* and *principles of religion*: This may serve to shew us how absurdly *vain* and *ridiculous* those men's *pretences* are, who deny the *Gospel-revelation*, and yet at the same time stile themselves the *only masters* of good sense, and free reasoning: For if they had any portion of that *light of nature* which they make such boasts of, they must know, that they are sure of nothing so much as of this, that their *reasonings* about *divine truths* are very *uncertain*; and therefore that they need some *supernatural* help and direction to assist them. For nothing can be plainer, than that they boast of faculties *far superior* to any that the whole *Heathen* world could ever pretend to; which is raising their merit to a most *extravagant* pitch, so that we must be excused if we refuse to pay them so very *absurd* a compliment: For what reason can a *modern Free-thinker* have, to believe himself a more *accurate reasoner* than the *Ancients* were, in those very matters they employ'd

ploy'd their whole time and searches about? If the present *Deists* are able to argue *more consistently* upon these points, 'tis not from their greater *sagacity*, but from a *new light*, which the *revelation* of the doctrines of CHRIST has furnished them withal.

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II. SECONDLY, If our *natural reason* and understanding is so *weak* and insufficient, for the instructing us in our duty to GOD, and in the methods of pleasing him, this consideration should be a check upon those *ambitious* spirits, who from an *overweening* conceit of their own abilities, dare affirm that *human reason* is the *rule* and *standard* of truth; and will therefore reject a doctrine of *Scripture*, though never so plainly revealed, because it does not lye level with their understandings: For this is to bring us back again to *nature*, and leave us in the same *bewildered* condition, from which the *Gospel* was designed to set us free.

I SHALL not enter *now* into the merits of this case, but only observe, that if that *Socinian* principle was true, the *main purpose* of a revelation is rendered unnecessary, which was to inform us in points not otherwise sufficiently plain and clear. And tho' 'tis pretended by those men, that they reject no doctrine of *Scripture*, but only *expound* some *passages*, in such a way as is most agreeable to *reason*: Yet 'tis certain, that the opinion that they have of the *sufficiency* of their *natural* powers to *comprehend* all truth, is the

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true ground of their searching for such expofitions as they do; and the force and violence which they ufe to very plain expreffions of *Scripture*, to wrest fuch a fenfe from them as *they* cannot *naturally* fignify, plainly fhews, that they firft make their own reason the *standard* of truth, and then try how to make the *Scripture* fquare with it. They firft lay it down as a principle that they muft believe nothing but what they can *comprehend*, and then try how to explain the *mysteries* of *Christianity* after fuch a manner, that *they* may contain nothing in them that is *incomprehenfible*; and if they could not be dexterous enough to find out fuch a meaning, I fuppofe they would make no difficulty of rejecting the *revelation* itfelf. But if what has been faid be true, of the *weaknefs* and infufficiency of the *wifdom* of the *Gentile world*, to find out the truths of GOD without a *revelation*, their needs no more be faid to fhew the *abfurdity* and prefumption of their practice.

III. THIRDLY, If the *Gentiles*, for want of *divine revelation*, were altogether at a lofs, and in *uncertainty* about the *immortality* of their fouls; and if the *doctrine* of the *Gospel* has brought them into a clear and *full light*, then from hence we may *infer*, upon what bottom it is that we ought always to ground our proofs of a future ftate, and the *immortality* of our *fouls*; not upon thofe *natural* and *moral* proofs which human
reason

reason is capable of finding out, but upon the *demonstration* of it, which the *Gospel* gives in the *resurrection* of our SAVIOUR from the dead.

There are men who, in the management of this point, have laid great stress upon those *proofs* of it that are fetcht from *principles* of natural reason: namely from the *spirituality* of the soul, and from observations upon the *unequal dispensations* of divine Providence in the human affairs of this life: I say, there are some, who have laid great weight upon these *natural* and *moral* proofs of the matter under consideration, to the neglect of that *divine* proof of it from the *Scriptures*, which is the only *true foot* that it does, or ever can stand upon fixt and *immoveable*; and their *zeal* and *earnestness* to demonstrate it that way, seems to me to be misemploy'd; there being danger, lest they should hereby go farther towards confirming *Infidels* in a *disbelief* of *revelation*, than in bringing them over to the truth.

FOR after all that *human* reason can urge for the certainty of a *future state*, an *Infidel* will still have room left to *cavil*; but if we once bring the matter to be try'd by the *Gospel-revelation*, this puts it upon a short issue, and leaves the *Infidel* no room to doubt of his *immortality*, any longer than he can doubt of the *evidence* of the *Scriptures* being the *word of GOD*. Whereas by urging *natural* arguments only, and contending for *them* as *undeniably* conclusive, they give a handle to the *patrons* of *reason*, even to su-

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spect the usefulness and importance of any *revelation* at all, since (as is hereby plainly intimated) revelation itself can only give some *super-numerary proofs* of what was *incontestable* before. I would not be understood to deny the *probability* or *usefulness* of these kind of arguments: I would however have them used for such purposes only as they can fairly serve: Namely, to set forth the *reasonableness* of our *religion*, and that the great truths of it are all agreeable to our *natural* sentiments, and fall in exactly with our *own* expectations. To this end they truly and justly serve; but they should not be strained any higher by those who are willing to own that *life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel*. But this is not the *only inference* that I must make from this head; But if this doctrine of the *immortality* of the *soul*, and a future state was so very obscure and uncertain to the *Gentile world*, and if the doctrine of the *Gospel* has made it *clear* and *indisputable*, then we certainly ought all of us to acknowledge the great goodness and *mercy* of *GOD* in the discovery of it to us, and shew the sense that we have of it, by all the expressions of a *sincere gratitude* and hearty thankfulness.

THE *Heathens*, though they were altogether in the dark, and in uncertainty about this great truth, yet they were very *inquisitive* into it, and employ'd all the light that *nature* or *art* could help them to, to find it out; and tho' the *best arguments* which their

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wit or *learning* could furnish them with, were only such as made it *probable* to them that it might be so, yet so strong were their *inclinations* to have it true, that many of them believed it, even upon such doubtful grounds: And though the utmost that their reasonings amounted to was only a faint guess at what might happen hereafter, yet this alone many times proved *sufficient* to *support* them under afflictions: At the same time that they never once dreamed of the *Resurrection* of their *Bodies*, looking upon *that* as a thing *impossible*; and when indeed they express but little *Joy* and *comfort* in the hopes they entertained concerning what was to happen to their *souls*. But if such confused notions, such faint and uncertain hopes could yet operate with so much force, how would these men have acted if they had had the assurances we have, that the whole man, *body* as well as *soul*, must live in a future state of happiness, and remain therein for ever? What *praises* and *thanksgivings* would it have drawn from the sober part of mankind, if they had lived under so *great a light*? If they had had such abundant satisfaction concerning their *resurrection* and *immortality*, as GOD has blest us with under the *Gospel*?

THE *mind* of *man* has naturally strong *propensions* and *inclinations* towards truth and knowledge: *Meat* and *drink* is not more pleasing to the *appetite*, than *truth* is to the *understanding*;

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standing; and those truths are most grateful, and most satisfying, that tend most to the *promoting* our *happiness*. Now certainly no truth can be in this respect of greater moment and consideration, than the certainty of a future life and immortality, in both body and soul. For, for a man to be sure, with that sort of assurance which the *resurrection of CHRIST* gives him, that he shall live in another world, the same *person* in *body* and *soul* that he is in this, must, if any thing can, make him careful to please GOD, and to take delight in obeying him. How then ought we to praise GOD in JESUS CHRIST for this great light which we receive from him, into this truth? How should a *sense* of this *benefit* beget in us a proportionable *gratitude*? How should it affect our hearts, and dispose us to glorify GOD with *continual* thanksgivings?

LASTLY, If our blessed LORD has thus been a *light to lighten the Gentiles*; if he has fully discovered to us the whole *counsel of GOD*, with regard to *religion*; if he has done this in so *plain* a manner as has been shewn, as these are *advantages* to us, infinitely greater than what many others have enjoy'd; we ought to look upon ourselves as so much the *more obliged* to a strict performance of every part of our duty. Let us have a care that we don't neglect such *extraordinary means of life and salvation* as are thus tendered us; that so kind an indul-

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gence of *Heaven* don't prove an aggravation of our guilt, and the cause of a heavier *damnation*. SERMON
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Let us therefore always bear in our mind the *mighty opportunities* that we have of growing in *grace* and true *holiness*, which they who, by the order of *Providence*, were placed in the ages of *Heathenism*, unhappily wanted.

LET us remember, that we are not of the offspring of the *Jews*, but of the *Gentiles*; and that our *ancestors* were once as much in the darkness and ignorance of *Heathenism*, as any people in the world: Since therefore by the undeserved mercy of GOD, we have been partakers of a *light* which was hidden from them; let us take care to *walk* in that *light*, and behave ourselves as children of the *light*: Let our advantages above others make us *double* our diligence; that our *virtue* and *piety* may go as much beyond theirs, as our *spiritual light* and knowledge does: Always bearing in our mind those weighty words of our SAVIOUR, with which I conclude: *To whom much is given, of them shall much be required; and he that knoweth his master's will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.*

Now to GOD the FATHER, GOD the SON, and GOD the HOLY GHOST, be ascribed glory, &c. now and evermore. *Amen.*

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S E R M O N V.

The Judgments of GOD inflicted for the Benefit of Man.

P S A L. cxix. 75.

I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right; and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

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THESE words are a pious and humble acknowledgment, which the *Psalmist* makes, of the justice and goodness of GOD, in the several dispensations of his *Providence* towards him; particularly in those many *afflictions* and *troubles* which befel him, and which (as may probably be concluded) he was then exercised with, from the hand of *Saul*. *I know, O LORD*, says he, *that thy judgments are right*, &c. As if he had said, “ I have well
“ weighed and considered these thy dealings
“ with me, and the manifold *afflictions* which
“ thou hast laid upon me; and I am fully con-
“ vinced

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“vinced that they are all done in *truth* and *equity*; and not only so, but in *great goodness* too: I am sensible, that thy *very judgments* are *mercies*; and that the *punishments* which thou inflictest, are *graciously* design’d; in pure *faithfulness*, for the *good* and benefit of my soul.”

Now what the *Psalmist* thus declares from his own *experience* is, or ought to be, the sense and language of every man in the like condition. For, beside the *authority* of his *example*, in patiently submitting to the hand of *Providence*, we find him moreover as a *witness*, testifying the ground and reason of his submission, which adds great *weight* to his *example*, and most effectually recommends it to our imitation. Men may indeed bear up under *afflictions* and worldly crosses with outward decency and a seeming evenness of temper, and yet not do it upon a *good* and *imitable* principle. It is sometimes the effect only of a *firmness* of *spirit*, and courage, which is natural to some men above others; or of a *stoical obstinacy* and *pride*, that scorns to be thought the *object* of other men’s pity, or even of *vain-glory*, that the world seeing their *bravery* may admire the greatness of their souls, and commend their behaviour on such occasions: But there is no *exemplary virtue* in all this, neither are any of these principles such a sufficient *support* to a man in afflictions as not to fail him often in his greatest extremities. But that *courage* and *patience* which

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which the *Psalmist* speaks of, and which *religion* teaches, is of a quite different nature; 'tis built upon a *rock* that no *tempests* can *shake*; 'tis grounded upon *invincible* principles, and such as will never fail. The *foundation* of a good man's hope, and patience, and serenity of mind under afflictions, is never laid in *self-confidence*; it does not rely upon his tottering *unstable passions*, or any worldly consideration whatsoever, but upon the *justice* and *goodness* of God: 'Tis grounded upon the assurance that he has of his being in the hands of a *good providence*; of a wise, and just, and *faithful Creator*; of one that *judges righteously*, and punishes *mercifully*, and all for the good of man.

AND indeed without such a *principle* as this, the life of man would be very uncomfortable; he would be of all creatures the *most miserable*; for *we are all born to trouble as naturally as the sparks fly upward*; and to be great, and rich, and honourable is no security against them, for *prosperity* itself has frequent mixtures of them; and the greatest worldly enjoyments are often *embittered* with *great and sudden calamities*. Men's *laughter* is often turned into *mourning*, and a dark and melancholy vail is sometimes cast over all the briskness and gaiety of the *highest earthly pomp* and grandeur: We do therefore absolutely stand in need of some *fix'd* and *steady principle* of *peace* and comfort to our minds, that may be a constant *support* to us under all the various circumstances

ces of life; and make us prepared with courage and constancy to endure the *surprizing changes* and chances to which this *mortal state* does continually expose us. And that is, plainly, this, and only this, that there is a *just* and *good Providence* that governs the world; and that all our afflictions are from GOD, who appoints and deals them out to us in *number, weight, and measure*, just as he, in his infinite wisdom, sees to be most expedient for us: And this is *an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast*, that will effectually answer all our doubts; and silence all our complaints, and compose all our fears; and preserve the ease and tranquillity of our mind firm and unshaken, whatever crosses may befall us.

I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

My design therefore from the words is, to inculcate this useful principle upon the minds of *Christians*, and shew that how ungrateful soever worldly *crosses* and *afflictions* may be to us, as being in truth *natural evils*, yet we must, and ought to bear them with patience, and *contentedness*, upon the same grounds and reasons that the *Psalmist* did, and which he here offers to our consideration. As,

I. FIRST, That all the evils and afflictions which we suffer are from GOD; *thou, O LORD, hast afflicted me.* And

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SECONDLY, That GOD makes them serve very wise ends and purposes; they are often necessary, and always the profitable instruments of our good and happiness. *Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*

I. FIRST, That all the evils and afflictions which we suffer are from GOD. This is a truth which the *holy scripture* very frequently assures us of, and calls upon us with great earnestness to see and consider it. See now (says GOD by Moses) *that I, even I am he, I kill, and I make alive, I wound and I heal**: And by *Isaiab*, *I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I the LORD do all these things †*. And so the prophet *Amos* expostulates in this case; *Shall there be evil, i. e. any calamity in a city, and the LORD hath not done it ‡?* that is, it is most certainly his doing, and by his appointment. But there is no need of multiplying texts of Scripture to prove this, since *natural reason* has taught men all along to acknowledge thus much. For *he* that made the world has undoubtedly the best right, and is most able to govern it; and if he governs it, he must direct and order all the affairs of it, otherwise he does not govern it with the same power and wisdom that he made it. Now it is plain that the afflictions and miseries which men suffer, make

* Deut. xxxii. 39. † *Isaiab* xlv. 7. ‡ *Amos* iii. 6.

up at least one *half* of the affairs of the world ; so that unless we suppose GOD to be but a *partial* Governor, and *defective* in his administration of things, (which cannot be supposed) *these* must be a considerable part of his *government*, and lye wholly under his direction and appointment. And this is so very evident, that there are, I believe, but few men who have not a strong *conviction* in their minds, that thus it must be. But the mischief is, that men too often content themselves with the *bare speculation* of this truth, and fall vastly short of it in their *practice* ; their *actions* for the most part contradict their *belief* ; and when *trouble* and *heaviness* lay hold upon them, they behave themselves as if there was no such thing as a GOD or *Providence* in the world. They then fix their eyes upon second causes only, and impute all their *misfortunes* and *calamities* to those things or persons which they see to be the *immediate instruments*, and occasions of them : But GOD, the cause of all causes, is *not in all their thoughts*.

HENCE it is that we find them discovering so much *impatience* and *discontent* under their sufferings ; either they become so *sullen* and dejected, as to fling off all hopes, and sink into an absolute *despair* of better days, or so *violent* and outrageous, as to talk of nothing but *revenge* on those whom they imagine to be the occasions of their misfortunes ; or, where that is impossible to *curse* their own *impotence*, that

SERMON they have not power, as they have wills to
V. execute it.

THUS for instance, the *ambitious Courtier*, when he is crossed in his designs, and tumbled down on a sudden (he knows not well how) from a *gainful and honourable* post, into *meanneſs and diſgrace*; the chief reſentment that he has of it, is, that he is unfortunately outwitted, and outpolicy'd by men *more cunning and dextrous at intrigues* than himſelf; that he is *barbarouſly* uſed, in order to bring on a new ſcene of affairs, and to advance others: And he complains heavily of the *falſhood* of his friends; and curſes bitterly the *malice* of his enemies. And this is all the *reſlection* he has to make upon his ruin.

THE *murmuring husbandman* cries out upon the *badneſs* and *unſeaſonableneſs* of the *weather*, that defeats his hopes and blaſts his labours, and reduces him to want and poverty.

THE *diſappointed merchant* vents his paſſion upon the mercileſs ocean, and charges all his loſſes upon the winds and tempeſts. And thus when *malignant diſeaſes* ſweep away our beſt friends, or deareſt relations; when a *devouring fire* conſumes our dwellings; when *the thief*, or *the extortioner* catches all that we have, and *the ſtranger* ſpoils our labours, how naturally do men reſt and fix their thoughts upon *ſecond cauſes*; and turn all their complaints upon an *infectious air*, upon the *unſkilfulneſs* of the *phyſician*, upon the *folly* and careleſſneſs of ſome, and the *malice* and

wickedness of others that are about them? And this is all the mystery they find in such *accidents*, as they call them; this is all the construction that they put upon their misery.

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BUT can men be so without understanding, as not to perceive that there is an *overruling Providence* in these things? That 'tis GOD's hand, and his arm that has done it? Who sits at the helm, and guides all the springs and motions of *second causes*, either *directing* or *permitting* them to produce all those calamitous events that are in the world? For it is *He* that *influences* the *counsels* of *princes*, and turns their hearts to pull down, or to set up, whomsoever he pleases. He *commands* the *clouds* *above*, and directs the *influences* of the heavens; and sends forth his commandment upon earth, which runneth very swiftly: All the *plots* and *contrivances* of men are under his power, and directed by his hand, to serve the wise ends of his *Government*. The air and seasons; the unruly elements, and the more unruly lusts and passions of men; the winds and seas obey him; *fire and hail, snow and vapour, and stormy winds fulfilling his word*. So that men do grossly mistake the matter and run themselves into a kind of *practical* atheism and infidelity, whilst they confine their views only to the *visible* and *immediate* causes of their *afflictions*, and don't look up to GOD, and consider him as the

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great disposer of all things: For *affliction*, as *Eliphaz* says *, *cometh not forth out of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground*; 'tis the stupid folly and inconsiderateness of men to think that these things are merely owing to *natural causes*, or the effects of *chance* and *accident*, and *ill fortune*, as we are used to call it. For *chance* can no more govern a world than it can make one: And indeed to speak properly, there is no such thing in nature, as *chance* and *accident*; for they are only names which ignorance gives to such events as have no *visible cause*, but are purely the work of an *invisible* hand.

FOR 'tis GOD that *afflicts* men; 'tis *providence* that *troubles* them; and would, by these means, awaken their minds to a just and lively sense of his *being* and *providence*, and of their own duty. And of this the *holy scripture* gives us many *pregnant* instances, and *infallible* proofs, purely for our admonition and conviction; that by such *examples* we may learn to make a right judgment of those *disasters* that do at any time befall us, and to resolve them into their *true original*. Thus we read of *Ahab*, (2 King. xxii.) that being deluded by false prophets into the hopes of victory, he gave battle to the King of *Syria*, and was slain by one that *drew a bow at a venture*, and *smote him between the joints of his harness*: Now there seems to be

* Job v. 6.



no more at first sight in all this, than that the base *flattery* of some, and a mere *random shot* of another, brought the King to his ruin; but what says the *scripture*? That even every *tittle* of all this was the LORD's doing. Who (as *Michaiab* the true prophet told *Ahab*) had put a *lying spirit* in the mouth of those prophets to persuade him to go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead: And directed the arrow (which was his messenger on this occasion) with the greatest certainty to wound and kill him. Thus when *Pharaoh's* chariot wheels dropt off in his pursuit after the *Israelites*, 'twas an *unlucky accident*, would some men say in such a case now-a-days, though there was no accident at all in it; for 'twas GOD that took them off, as *Moses* tells us, and made them go heavily; so that the *Ægyptians* themselves perceived it, and said, *Let us fly from the face of Israel, for the LORD fighteth for them against the Ægyptians**.

YOU have heard of the patience of Job; and what grievous calamities beset him; and what astonishing messages he received one upon another; that the *Sabeans* first, and then the *Chaldeans* had plundered him of his cattle, and slain his servants; that the lightning had burnt up his sheep, and a violent storm blown down the house upon his children. But how came all these sad disasters thus to conspire, as it were, together against Job?

* Exod. xiv. 25:

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Why, in truth, GOD had determined all this, and therefore suffered all these things to concur to his ruin. The *Sabeans* and *Chaldeans* were in this case the *ministers* of *providence*, and GOD's servants (as he sometimes calls bad men, when they execute what he has ordered). And it was the *fire of GOD* that fell from heaven; and it was the LORD who was in the *wind*; for, although (as appears from the relation of this matter) * 'twas the *Devil* that managed all these *second causes* to *Job's* hurt, yet it was by a *permission* from GOD; and we find *Satan* himself confessing fairly this truth, that without GOD's hand and concurrence he could do nothing. *Put forth thy hand now*, says he to GOD, *and touch all that he has, and he will curse thee to thy face*. And we find that righteous *Job* did firmly believe all this, by receiving these evils as from GOD. — He fell down upon the ground and worshiped, and said, — *The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away, blessed be the name of the LORD*. *In all this Job sinned not, nor charged GOD foolishly*. He took all these disasters right, and bore them *patiently* because it was GOD that sent them.

AND did we but imitate this good man's *example* in all our sufferings, and look up to GOD as the author of them, this would perfectly cure all our doubts and perplexities; and prevent all our *murmuring* under them; and make

* Job ch. i.

us,

us, *in patience to possess our souls.* 'Twould make us *masters* of our passions; and to have less angry thoughts, and *no revengeful* designs against those that afflict us. And indeed, what a strong consolation must it needs be, to consider, that tho' we live in the midst of an ill-natured and *malicious* world, that is utterly minded to do mischief; and is continually alarming us with *surprizing disasters*, and *fresh scenes* of misery: Though the *angry elements* threaten us, and the *malice* of wicked men rage and swell against us; tho' we daily walk through the valley of the shadow of death, (as the Psalmist speaks) yet we need fear no evil, because this is our security, that if our enemies are *mighty*, he that dwells on high is *mightier* than all these, and has them wholly in his keeping, and absolutely under his command, to chain up their *power*, or let it loose upon us as he thinks fit. So that neither sword, nor famine, nor pestilence; neither men nor devils, can have any *power* at all over us to hurt us, unless it be given them from above.

WHEN therefore we *suffer afflictions*, 'tis plainly the will of GOD that we should do so: And then we have all the reason in the world to acknowledge his hand, and give glory to his government, by sitting down *patiently* and *contentedly* under the portion of them that he allots us. And that more especially upon these following considerations, *viz.* Because all the *evils* and *afflictions* which we suffer, are from an *Almighty*,

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V.a just, a wise, and a good GOD. All which
I shall consider in their order.

I. FIRST, We ought *patiently* to bear the evils that we lye under, because they are brought upon us by AN ALMIGHTY GOD. GOD has an *absolute authority* and dominion over us, and consequently can never do amiss when he afflicts us; whether it be for life, or whether it be for death; he is always in the right, because he is LORD of his creatures, and has a just and full power of doing with them as he pleases. And we see a plain acknowledgment of this in that *power and authority* which men exercise over one another. *We have fathers of the flesh*, as the *Apostle* speaks *, *which correct us, and we give them reverence*, because they are our fathers. A *servant* likewise, or a *subject*, will take that with patience from the hand of a *master* or *sovereign* which he would resent as a wrong and an injury done to him from any other: And *shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of Spirits?* To the Sovereign of the world, in whom *we live, and move, and have our being?* To whom we all belong, even all that we are, and all that we have?

IF THEN he takes away *children* by sword or sickness, he takes only his own, and what he had before given unto us; for *children and the fruit of the womb, are an heritage and gift that cometh of the LORD*†. If he deprives us of our *riches*, and gives all that we have into the possession of o-

* Heb. xii. 9. † Psal. cxxvii. 3.

thers,

thers, he still does us no wrong; for *the earth is the LORD's and the fulness thereof*. If he brings grievous *distempers* among us, to torment or destroy us, there can be no hardship in this, we can have nothing to complain of: For why may not GOD *do what he will with his own*? 'Twas he *that made us, and not we ourselves*; and may he not *freely*, and by what means he thinks fit, call for that life back again which he at first *freely* lent us? So that we see the *absolute* right that GOD has over us, as our Creator and Preserver, is an *undeniable argument*, why we should take every thing in good part from him, and *patiently* submit to those strokes of his hand, which he at any time lays upon us. And we find that all good men that have ever lived under a sense of GOD's *providence* and revered his *power* have very readily owned all this.

THUS it was that old *Eli* received the sad message from GOD by the mouth of *Samuel*, *It is the LORD*, says he, *let him do what seemeth him good* *. In like manner *David* in a full persuasion of this truth, laid his hand upon his mouth, and sat down in silence under his sufferings: *I was dumb*, says he, *and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it*. And it was this very consideration that prevailed with *Job* to submit *patiently*, and even *thankfully* when he was divested of all.—*The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away, blessed be the name of the LORD* †.

* 1 Sam. viii. 18. † Job i. 21.



II. SECONDLY, We ought *patiently* to bear the evils that we lay under, because they are inflicted by a JUST GOD; by one, who, as he has an *absolute power*, so he observes an *exact justice* in these his *dispensations*. Power indeed without *justice*, is a very *terrifying* thing, and even innocence itself has good reason to tremble at it. For this is the power of devils and of wicked men, guided only by *malice*, and *productive* of nothing but mischief and *cruelty*. But *power* and *justice* are as one and the same thing in GOD, and can never be separated: He has just so much power as he has justice, and can do nothing by virtue of *one*, which is not exactly ruled and guided by the *other*; so that whatsoever comes from the hand of GOD must necessarily be done in *truth* and *equity*. And our *afflictions* are indeed so far from being any impeachment of GOD's *justice*, that were they greater than at any time they are, they would only prove the more clear and full demonstrations of it.

FOR what is there that any one has at any time received in this kind, that he has not infinitely deserved? And how many good things does he at the same time *undeservedly* enjoy? Should GOD be *extreme* to mark what is done *amiss*; should he *enter into judgment* with us as we deserve, instead of suffering so lightly as we do, we should be consumed in a moment. His *infinite justice* would abundantly make good all that his

infinite

infinite power could do unto us. It is in truth a piece of the most *inconsiderate folly*, and even *base ingratitude*, in men, to *repine* at their sufferings; and to scorn or calumniate the methods that GOD uses in inflicting them, when they would thereby make the world believe that they are *hardly* and *cruelly* dealt with; and are made the wretched instances of *oppress'd virtue*, and *injured innocence*. And this is a fault that very good men (even a patient *Job*) are too apt to run into; whilst they labour to vindicate their own integrity, and instead of ascribing *righteousness* to their *Maker*, rashly condemn him who is most *just*, by endeavouring to prove themselves *righteous*; saying, as *Job* did, *I am clean, without transgression; I am innocent, neither is the iniquity in me; behold he findeth occasion against me, he counteth me for his enemy; I am righteous, and GOD hath taken away my judgment: Should I lye against my right? My wound is incurable without transgression* *. *Job* indeed, from the testimony of GOD himself, was an upright man; one that feared GOD and eschewed evil: And yet we find that *Elibu* first, and afterwards GOD himself severely rebuked him for such presumptuous thoughts, and unbecoming language, as this was. *Thinkest thou, says Elibu †, this to be right, that thou saidst; my righteousness is more than GOD's?*

* *Job xxxiv. 6.* † *Job xxxv. 2.*

Surely

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*Surely it is meet to be said unto GOD, I have
 born chastisement, I will not offend any more * :
 For he will not lay upon men more than right,
 that he should enter into judgment with GOD.
 Yea surely GOD will not do wickedly, neither will
 the ALMIGHTY pervert judgment. He shews
 also that such a justification of himself as that,
 was only to be expected from the mouths of
 wicked men, who add rebellion to their sin; and
 that he herein plainly betray'd his own weak-
 ness and ignorance, which GOD himself after-
 wards sets before him more at large, by a most
 astonishing representation of his works. He
 thereby lets him see that such a poor worm as
 he was, that was so far from knowing how to
 make a world, or to govern it, that he was a
 perfect stranger to most of the things that are
 done in it, ought to be infinitely ashamed and
 afraid to challenge GOD's providence, and ar-
 raighn his justice in the administration of it.
 Shall he that contends with the ALMIGHTY
 instruct him? He that reproveth GOD let him
 answer it; especially considering that after all
 his righteousness, he was far from being clean
 before GOD, and had sins enough left to acquit
 GOD's Justice, in all that he had done unto him.*

*AND we find Job at last to be sensible of
 this, Behold I am vile, says he, what shall I
 answer thee? Once have I spoken, but I will not
 answer; yea twice, but I will proceed no far-*

* Job xxxiv. 31.

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ther. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor my self in dust and ashes.* Now if

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a man of such extraordinary piety and virtue, was thus humbled in his confidence, and forced after all to confess GOD's justice, in all those sad disasters that befel him, what shall we say at any time in our defence, who are *all over* guilt and folly; and fall as short of him in integrity, and perfection, as we do in the weight and measure of his sufferings. Must we not needsown that *righteousness belongeth unto GOD; but unto us confusion of face*; that he is perfectly just in all that he brings upon us; because we have sinned and done foolishly, and rebelled against him; our own hearts and consciences that do so severely upbraid and condemn us, will for ever justify GOD, and clear him when he is judged.

AND indeed, if we seriously consider our own ways and doings, and examine the true state of the case between GOD and ourselves when he corrects us, we shall presently find that even in our most afflicted condition 'tis not rigour, but the mercy of justice by which he deals with us; and that for one evil that we suffer there are ten thousand which we have most justly deserved from him. Wherefore then does a man complain? A living man for the punishment of his sin? With what face can such obnoxious creatures as we are, repine at our suf-

Job xlii. 6.

ferings;

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ferings; we that have justly *forfeited* life and all, and yet *live* and enjoy with a little suffering, the *manifold* blessings of GOD? To *complain* therefore of afflictions, when we have at the same time such apparent reason to be *thankful*, is hypocrisy and ingratitude; and might justly provoke even *mercy* itself to ruin us. Now tho', I believe, there is no one but will readily own the truth of this, yet, generally speaking, so ungracious are men, that, though in their *words* they will acknowledge all this, yet in their *works* they deny it. For when *afflictions* come, they are loth to take due shame unto themselves; but would fain be thought *innocent*. They are either so full of their own merit, as not to understand, or so obstinate, as not to confess ingenuously the *justice* of their *suffering*. They cast about on every side for *pretences*, and will blame even heaven itself, rather than stoop into their own breasts, and behold the *poisonous fountain* from whence all their calamities do arise.

THUS for instance, when *parents* are deprived of the increase of their house, and an *only child* is cut off in the flower of his age; or when they have children *without comfort*, that only *consume their eyes*, and *grieve their hearts*, by their undutiful and untoward behaviour, wasting the provision that had been made for them, in lewdness and debauchery: How rudely do we often see them open their mouths against *Heaven*, calumniate *Providence*, and curse even the

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the *blessings* they have received! But what a strange piece of insolence is this, to charge the fault of their misfortunes upon GOD, and overlook the plain and known cause of them all, their own evil deeds. For is GOD *unrighteous* in defeating the hopes of such a family as is intended 'tis likely to be *built* by the spoils, and upon the ruins of others, by the most unjust methods of extortion, fraud and oppression? Can GOD's Justice any way shew itself more seasonably, than by making *wicked children* the *scourges* of their parents, who first led them the way, and for want of good discipline and instruction, or (which renders the best discipline and instruction vain and useless) by their own *vicious examples* trained them up, and gave them daily encouragement to *mock* at goodness and piety? Wicked parents, I confess, are generally contented to sin *themselves*, and will be at some pains to make their *children* better: But this, 'tis plain, is not the natural tendency of things: For *children* will incline to imitate their *parents*, and 'tis but *just* in GOD to let them do so, to shew them their *own* pictures and make them smart at the *sight* of them.

WHEN GOD so severely punished *Eli*, by the loss of both his sons in one day, was there not a cause? He did not indeed encourage them to be wicked by his *own example*, but his fond indulgence and remissness in correcting them, made him an *accessory* to their wickedness; *Thou hast honoured thy sons more than me*, says GOD to him.

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Conscious therefore of his own fault and folly, the good old man received the sad news with *meekness*; acknowledged the justness of his punishment, and said, *It is the LORD, let him do what seemeth him good.* Thus *Eli* blessed GOD and died.

So again when wicked men *oppress* us in a *just* cause, and deprive us of our estates by fraud and violence, we are ready to look upon this as a reproach to *Providence*, for not defending us in our rights: Whereas 'tis certain that a *sinful* man may have a *just* cause, and then it *becomes* just in GOD to let him sink in it. Men indeed are highly unjust in spoiling us of what we have a right to; but *being sinners* we have no claim to GOD's protection, and therefore it is no injustice in GOD to withdraw it, and suffer us to be oppressed by them. And if we would consult our own consciences, at what time, and in what case soever afflictions fall upon us; though we may perhaps find ourselves *innocent* as to the *particular* occasion, and *immediate* cause of them; yet if we look farther, and search deeper into the more *remote* reason of things, our hearts will undoubtedly smite us, and shew us by what *false* and *sinful* steps we have run ourselves into them; and that we have ourselves most justly pulled down misery and disgrace upon our own heads, by the work of our own hands. So that all the world, in strictness of *justice*, must *become guilty before GOD*; and be forced to confess that *he is righteous in all his ways*; that *affliction* are the *proper* fruits, and

and *natural* consequences, and *just* reward of our own actions, and that our ways are very *unequal*, but that GOD's ways are *just* and *equal*, and that there is *no unrighteousness* in him. But, SERMON
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III. THIRDLY, The WISDOM of GOD is another most rational ground for our patient submission to those evils which *he* brings upon us. For *infinite Wisdom*, be sure, will always act wisely, and do every thing upon the most *prudent* grounds and for the *best* reasons. And as *absolute power*, infinitely *just*, can do us no wrong, but will always *minister true judgment to the people*, so *infinite Wisdom* can never err in the distribution of it; but will always chuse the most *proper seasons*, the *fittest means*, and most *suitable method* of doing it. When *men* undertake to do *justice* upon offenders, we have reason to be jealous of *them*, and may justly many times suspect the truth and exactness of *their* proceedings; for though they be *good* men and *lovers of truth* and equity, yet unless they be withal very *wise* and discreet, they may after all be very *unjust*, and do a great deal of harm and wrong to others; for *imperfect* wisdom, and *imperfect* understanding must always be more or less an imperfection in the administration of *justice*. And therefore 'tis no unusual thing to see men of great *uprightness* and integrity decree punishments very *unequally*, and disproportionately to the crimes committed; and sometimes to mistake in the very person

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son of the offender; acquitting the *guilty* and condemning the *innocent*; and all for want of a sufficient understanding of matters of fact, and the *true state* and circumstances of the case before them.

BUT *infinite Wisdom* is a perfect security to every one; it may be safely trusted to do us *justice* at any time, for it is always *infallible*, it never can be mistaken. He that made us, and *in whom we live*, knows us thoroughly, and all our circumstances; he knows how many, and how hainous our offences are; and what punishments are most agreeable to our *deserts*; most *proper* for us to undergo, and for his *justice* to inflict. And *as well* as we think we know and understand ourselves, GOD certainly understands us *much better*, and can at all times choose better for us than *self-love* itself could do, were we left to our *own* choice. For so *blind* are we, in what concerns our *true interest*, that we generally *choose* to our *own hurt*; and so fondly are we in love with ease and pleasure, that *prosperity* is the only thing we long for, tho' it be very often to our utter ruin. But *affliction* which is purely GOD's choice, (for we never are so wise as to choose it for ourselves) we are never willing to see the wisdom of *that*, though it does in never so many instances turn visibly to our *advantage*, and is always intended so to do, by him that knows not to chuse for us amiss.

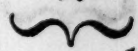
SOCRATES, that *wise* and good *Heathen*, was an *admirable example* in this particular, even to

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to the best *Christians*. He had so thoroughly considered the *wisdom* of *Providence*, and his own *ignorance*, as to what was good or bad for him in this life, that as we are told, (by *Xenophon* †) he made this always his prayer to GOD, ἀπλῶς τὰγαθὰ δίδόναι, *simply* and in general terms only, *That GOD would give him what was good for him*; not daring to mention either *prosperity* or *adversity*; but leaving it intirely to him, who best knew to chuse what was best for him. And 'tis much to the same purpose, that the *Heathen Satyrist* \* most excellently advises in this case, after having observed the foolish mistakes men run into when they pretend to be *their own* carvers. *Leave it wholly to GOD*, says he, *to judge what is best and fittest for you*:

*Nam pro jucundis aptissima quæque dabunt Dī.*

GOD will be sure to give you, though may be not what is most pleasant and grateful, yet always what is most proper and convenient for you. You are apt to measure good and evil by the outward appearance only, and choose that which your rash passions prompt you to; but GOD sees into the *true* reasons, and *hidden consequences* of things; and wisely prevents the *mischief* of your own choice, by giving you that which will be more useful and profitable for you in the end.

† Ἀπομνημ., v. i. c. 3. \* *Juv. Sat. 10.*



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Ask therefore only *patience* and a *sound mind*, that you may learn to take all in good part, and *think as well* of *afflictions*, as you usually do of pleasures; nay to *prefer afflictions* when a wise GOD prefers them, and thinks them fittest for you.

*I will defend thee*, says *Epicetetus*, speaking of GOD's dispensations to men, and their uneasiness many times under them: *I will defend thee against all the world*; *I will make an apology for thy providence in these things to every body*; *I maintain that all is good, because thou art so*.

AND should not this make *Christians* even blush and be confounded, to see *Heathens* thus read lectures to them of their duty to GOD; to hear *them* talk of a patient resignation to an all-wise *Providence*, and find *themselves* guilty of the quite contrary? Religion certainly has taken but very little root in us, if we are outdone by *Heathens*: If it does not raise us to a greater perfection than they attained to; if it does not give us a more awful regard to the *wisdom* of *Providence* than they had; and if it does not make us acknowledge, not only *cheerfully*, but even *thankfully*, that we are not fit to be humoured and left to our own choice; that we are not *wise* enough to tell with what *pains* we ought to be corrected; or with what *troubles* we should be exercised; but that we are always best, and safest, and *most happy* in the hands of GOD; where the most *perfect* wisdom and *unerring* knowledge has the care and government

vernment of us; especially if we consider, in **SERMON**  
the *fourth* and last place, **V.**

IV. FOURTHLY, That the *evils* we lay under are inflicted on us by a GOOD and MERCIFUL GOD. *Thou art good, and dost good*, says the *Psalmist*. *Goodness* is GOD's very *essence* and nature; and therefore he cannot deny himself, but must always do that which is *very good*. 'Twas his *goodness* alone that moved his *wisdom* and power, to call us into *being*, and by the same it is that we have been ever since upheld and preserved: Because he is *good*, because *his mercy endureth for ever*. And indeed we are so much the objects of this his *goodness*, that he never fails to have the regard of a compassionate *Father* towards us, and by all means to promote our greatest happiness. So that when he handles us with seeming severity, he does it still with a *gracious* design, that he may secure our interest, *that way*, which could not be so well provided for in any *other*. For he *does not afflict willingly the children of men* \*. This is not the method that he *naturally* chuseth and delights in, but a plain force put upon his *goodness*; he does not afflict us that we may *feel pain*, and that he may *please himself* with the *sighs* and *groans* of the miserable, but merely because the *good* of his *creatures* requires it, and compels him to do what he calls *his strange work* upon us, for our grett-

\* Lam. iii. 33



er benefit and advantage. He is far from *seeking* occasions against us (for he never wants occasions) to torment and destroy us. And did he love to *triumph in our miseries*, we are so absolutely in his power, that he could *crush us*, every moment; and were it not for his *goodness* would most certainly do it, making us as *miserable* as we have been *sinful*.

WE must needs therefore resolve all our sufferings into such causes as make for the honour of his *goodness*; and believe that whenever he *afflicts* us, 'tis because he *loves* us, and *seeks our good*; and when he makes our *cup bitter*, that 'tis merely for our *health* to cure or to prevent all *distempers* in us; and when he takes away our worldly *comforts*, depriving us of our *estates*, or *friends*, or *children* (which are as our own soul) that it is still with the same *fatherly design*, with which he first gave them: To let us see that we either set too *great* or too *little* a value upon them, and that our greatest good and happiness may be secured much better without them. So that in all these things *mercy still rejoiceth against judgment*, always intending, and by all means, and in every thing *striving* to advance the everlasting good and interest of our own souls. And this brings me to the *second general consideration*, which the *text* proposes to us: But of that at some other opportunity. Now to GOD the FATHER, &c. be Glory now, &c. *Amen*.



# S E R M O N VI.

The Judgments of GOD inflicted for the Benefit of Man.

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P S A L. cxix. 75.

*I know, O LORD, that thy Judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*

**M**Y DESIGN in discoursing upon these words SERMON VI.  
was, as I told you, to shew, that how  
ungrateful soever worldly *crosses* and *afflictions* may be to us, as being in truth *natural evils*, yet that we must and ought to bear them with *patience* and *contentedness*, upon the same grounds and reasons that the *Psalmist* did, and which he here offers to our consideration.  
As

I. FIRST, That all the *evils* and afflictions which we suffer are from GOD, *Thou, O LORD, hast afflicted me.* And,

I 4

II. SECONDLY,

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II. SECONDLY, That GOD makes them serve very wise ends and purposes; being often the *necessary*, always the *profitable* instruments of our good and happiness, *Thou in FAITHFULNESS hast afflicted me.*

I HAVE dispatched the FIRST *head*, and I now proceed to the SECOND namely,

II. THAT GOD makes the *evils* and *afflictions* with which he is pleased at any time to *exercise* us, *all* serve very wise and good purposes. GOD is true and *faithful* to our *interest*, and therefore it is that he *afflicts* us. Hereby we are brought nearer to *him*, and nearer to *our duty*; our *virtues* by this means get the *prebeminence*, and our *vicious inclinations* are *discouraged*. *Affliction*, when it makes us *smart*, is so far from doing us any *real hurt* or *prejudice*, that on the contrary, under that disguise it mainly *contributes* to our *greatest good*. It *cures* indeed by *hurting*, as *Seneca* speaks; and like *causticks* and *incisions* upon the body, it *operates* in a way sufficiently *painful*, but it is nevertheless in many cases of absolute necessity, for the making a sure and *perfect cure*. For it *curbs* the *exorbitancy* of our passions and sinful desires, and subjects them to the *guidance* of our *reason*. It brings us to a due *sense* of the frail and perverse disposition of our own natures; and acquaints us both how *froward* we are, and also how unable of ourselves, to think or do any thing *as of ourselves*, and that  
our

our SUFFICIENCY is of GOD; and in doing this it quickens our *faith*, and enlivens our *hope*, and inflames our *love* and *zeal* towards GOD; it stirs up in us every grace, and puts in motion all the *springs* of our *souls*; it makes the death of sin easy to us, and raises in us the seeds of piety unto a life of righteousness. Tho' our outward man fail and perish, yet the *inward man* is renewed day by day. But more particularly,

GOD is *faithful* in afflicting us, because *afflictions* in their own nature tend to *create good dispositions* in us. As

I. FIRST, They bring us to a *considering* temper, and a sober sense of things, making us look narrowly into our ways, and *seriously reflect* upon the sins and follies that we have committed; and so prepare the way for *repentance* and the reformation of our lives and actions. For it is the want of *consideration*, that makes men *run headlong* into sinful and vitious courses: Because they don't wisely enquire into the *true nature*, and real worth of things; and what is like to be the *final issue*, and result of a good or bad choice; what *charms* of *comfort* there are in *virtue*, and what *stings* in *vice*: How great and glorious the *rewards* of the one are, and how severe and dreadful the *punishments* of the other. For 'tis certain that when these are put in the *balance* together, and well weighed and examined, the *scales* will soon turn on the side of *virtue*, and a man must be forced to determine upon the spot, that *vice* is found *infinitely*



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*ly wanting.* Empty and thin as the *fleeting* air, even less than nothing and vanity; for all *vice is folly*, and therefore can never bear the trial of *reason* and *discretion*; 'tis always ashamed of its own cause, and yields it up entirely to *virtue* and goodness.

HENCE it is, that the *Scripture* every where marks out *sinners* by the name of *fools*, men of no wisdom, of no thought; they *don't consider that they do evil*; They are a nation, as GOD says of the *Israelites*, void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them \*. Now one great reason of this *inconsiderateness* in men is, that they enjoy too much *ease* and *prosperity*: For as kindly as we are apt to think of it, and as industriously as we count it, it is but too often *our enemy*; and, instead of being that *happiness* we take it for, betrays us into the most *fatal consequences* imaginable. It does naturally tend to *unbidge* all the powers of the soul, and *dissolve* our minds into levity and wantonness: Scattering all our thoughts upon vain and fruitless objects; *good men* are very rarely the better for it, and *bad men*, it is to be feared, are always a great deal the worse. The wisest of men in an uninterrupted course of health and success, do strangely become *vain in their imaginations*, and are apt to say with the fool in the parable, *Soul, take thy ease, eat drink and be merry*; but GOD is not in all their thoughts; they forget

\* Deut. xxxii. 28.

themselves that they are *men*, and no wonder then if they are unmindful of their *Maker*, and forget *GOD* days without number.

*WHEN* *Jesurun* waxed fat, then 'twas that he kick'd, and lightly regarded the rock of his salvation \*. Now *adversity* sets all these matters right again, by turning us quite another way, and plainly forcing us to a *recollection* of thought, and a steadiness of mind and temper. In the day of *prosperity* rejoice, 'tis said, but in the day of *adversity* consider †: This is the natural tendency and proper effect of these two states, which *GOD* has set one over against another; that as great liberties as men usually take in *prosperity*, as full of mirth, and as regardless as they are of their duty, *adversity* on the contrary fixes their loose and wandering thoughts, and compels them to a cool and serious consideration of things. When they are once tamed, and brought low through oppression, through any plague or trouble, then they begin in good earnest to retire within themselves; and can't avoid listening to the reproofs and clamours of their own consciences. For the noise and violence of their passions is then abated, and gives way to reason to expostulate with them, the cause of virtue and goodness, and compute the follies and mischiefs of a sinful course of life; they then see clearly that *vice* is not innocent; that *religion* is no jest; that *prophaneness* is nonsense, and *Atheism* dis-

\* Deut. xxxii. 15. † Eccl. vii. 14.

*traction;*

*traction*; that their only refuge, their greatest comfort, their truest and most lasting interest lies in loving GOD and goodness above all things whatsoever. Thus the *Psalmist* tells us, of the *backsliding Israelites*, that when GOD slew them then they sought him; and they returned and enquired early after GOD. And they remembered that GOD was their rock, and the high GOD their Redeemer \*. And GOD tells us by the prophet *Hosea* †, that this was the very reason why he afflicted them: In their affliction, says he, they will seek me early.

WHEN men's souls are streightned within them, and they are perfectly at a loss for other comforts; they very readily seek to GOD, and acknowledge him to be their only friend and protector. And let them be never so bad, affliction will more or less have this effect upon them, to put them in mind of their sins, and to awaken them to some sense of goodness; it will let loose their consciences upon them, to scare them with dreams, and terrify them thro' visions and guilty apprehensions of the punishments that are due to them for their enormities. Even those sins that trouble us least, and are almost forgotten in our prosperity, do strangely revive upon us in adversity, and prove very swords, that pierce us through with many sorrows. Thus Joseph's brethren, when they were fallen into distress, a long time after their barbarous usage of him, when all was

\* Psalm lxxviii. 34, 35. † Hof. v. 15.



hushed up, and in a manner forgotten, how suddenly does the *remembrance* of their crime start up in their minds and smite their hearts, with (as it were) a *new* and fresh guilt? *They said one to another, we are verily guilty concerning our brother, — therefore is this distress come upon us* †. And thus the haughty king *Nebuchadnezzar*, who defied both *GOD* and man, in the triumphs of his *power* and greatness, when he was turned into the open air to lodge and feed among beasts, was humbled thereby into the sense and *reason* of a *man*; his understanding then returned to him, and he was driven to confess the *power* and *justice* of *GOD*; That *the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will*. Now *I king Nebuchadnezzar praise, and extoll, and honour the King of Heaven; all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment; and those that walk in pride, he is able to abase* \*. But moreover,

AS AFFLICTION raises in bad men a very quick and pungent sense of their duty; so for the same reason it makes them gentle and tractable, willing to hearken to that advice which, in prosperity, they so much flight and despise; and to receive patiently and kindly the good instructions and admonitions of others. For it is natural for men to call in help, where they are sensible of their own weakness; and thankfully learn that from others, which they are

† Gen. xlii. 21. \* Dan. iv. 37.

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convinced is *wanting* in themselves. And as bad men, are thus often recovered to a sound mind and temper, by the severity of *afflictions*, so good men are much more *benefited* by them, being already prepared to make a due use of them; for they are faithful monitors to them, to look more *warily* into their lives and actions, and *spy* out the weakneses and miscarriages they have been guilty of; and so renew in them all their good purposes, and excite them to a greater diligence and watchfulness in their duty. Then it is that they turn their minds with greater earnestness upon *religion* and *goodness*, and strive to make amends for those slips and failings, which the *remissness* and *inadvertency* of a *prosperous state* has betray'd them into. Thus it is that the *Psalmist* tells us from his own experience—*Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word. It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes.*

AND indeed afflictions are so peculiarly fitted to calm men's passions, and to bring them to a reasonable sense of themselves, that where they fail of this effect it is a *case* next to *desperate*; a sign of the most obdurate and *profligate* temper imaginable; and Heaven itself seems to lay aside all hopes of such sinners recovery. *Why should ye be stricken any more?* says GOD to the *Jews*; *ye will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick,*

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*sick, and the whole heart is faint* \*. And we find it recorded in *Scripture* as a mark of perpetual *infamy* upon *Abaz*, that he was so wicked, that no *afflictions* would do any good upon him. *In the time of his distress he trespassed yet more against the LORD.* THIS IS THAT KING *AHAZ* †. It is not GOD's method to work miracles, on purpose to convince men of their *folly* and *obstinacy*. But *affliction* is his work, *his strange work*, as the *Prophet* speaks, which is sufficient to awaken men, if they will be awakened; and if this will not bring down the courage of the boldest sinner, and make him grow wiser and better, 'tis impossible any thing else should. If a man is proof against this, there can nothing more remain but a *fearful looking for of judgment*, and *fiery indignation to devour the adversary*.

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GOD is *faithful* in *afflicting* us, because *afflictions* moderate our desires, and take off our affections from the things of the world, which we are too naturally addicted to. The *three grand sources* of our corruption, as St. *John* ‡ tells us, are, *the lust of the flesh*, *the lust of the eyes*, and *the pride of life*; and the proper fuel that administers to the enflaming of these, are the *riches*, and *honours*, and *pleasures of this world*; and while we are in *prosperity*, these attack us at such an advantage, that we find it a very difficult matter to withstand the charms

\* *Isaiah* i. 5. † *2 Chron.* xxviii. 22. ‡ *1 Joh.* ii. 16.



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and allurements of them; they lead us too often away captive, and force us to yield our members servants to obey them. But *afflictions* and *crosses* discover the *true worth* and value of these glittering pretences; and shew us that they are all *vanity and vexation of spirit*; and vex us then most, when we stand most in need of *comfort* and *assistance* from them, and that if we will be truly happy, we must resolve to have very *low* and *mean opinions* of these things; always hang loose from them in our *affections*; and learn to live sometimes *contentedly* without them. This, I say, is a *lesson* which *afflictions* faithfully instruct us in; and (loth as we are to learn it) force us, whether we will or no, to understand it.

FOR, as *Pliny* well observes in the case of his sick friend; *Optimi sumus dum infirmi*; “we are then best when we are most infirm;” for, as he goes on, “What sick man feels the “thirst of covetousness or the power of lust? “He has no amours to serve, nor ambitious “views to gratify. Riches are of no account “with him; and a very small portion of “them will then suffice him; for he finds “he can carry nothing away with him, but “must be forced at last to leave them for others\*.” Indeed the very *apprehension* of a *fore calamity* coming upon us, is enough to *cast a damp* upon all the enjoyments of worldly pomp and pleasure, to *change our countenance*,

\* Lib. 7. Ep. 26.

*inflicted for the Benefit of Man.* 129

and trouble our thoughts, and make our knees SERMON VI.  
*smite one against another, as Belsazzar's did.*

'Tis enough to make us, like *Ahab*, *humble ourselves and put on sackcloth, and fast, and go softly*; and *sickness*, above all others, does most effectually do this; because it weakens our bodies, and wastes our spirits, leaving us neither power, nor will, nor any manner of relish to *sensual entertainments*.

It must be confest indeed, that *corrupt nature* is but too apt to play the *hypocrite* in such cases, and basely *relapse* upon the *recovery* of its health and vigour, and shew as great a fondness for these things *afterwards*, as ever it did before. But still it is plain, that *afflictions* do *their part* faithfully to us: And this only shews, that men may persist in their *folly*, when they have had a fair opportunity of learning *wisdom*: and that some will choose to be miserable, in spite of all the *loud warnings*, and *awakening messages of Heaven* to the contrary. It shews, that although in *affliction* men see plainly their mistakes, and profess to take up *right notions*, and *virtuous resolutions* for the future, yet their false hearts may deceive them in all this; and those good purposes like the *early dew may pass away*, and be *evaporated* by the returning *warmth of prosperity*; and so leave them as bad as ever. And yet *afflictions* have been *faithful and true* to the design for which they were sent; they have searched out the rottenness of

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our wounds, and fairly begun the *cure*, and put us in a hopeful way of *recovery*, so that *we only* are to *blame*, if we will not be *healed*; but still return to our old vomit, and undo all that has been done for us. But,

III. THIRDLY, As *afflictions* are proper means of weaning us from the *love* of *worldly* enjoyments, so, as a consequence of this, they tend to reconcile us to the *thoughts* of *death*, and *another world*, which is another, and a still greater instance of GOD's *faithfulness* in inflicting them upon us.

THIS world is certainly at the best *no very comfortable* place, and a *wise man* that considers it, may see a great many good reasons why he would not desire to live *always* in it, if it was left entirely to his own choice: Forty or fifty years acted with the *best success*, afford him so *unsatisfied a prospect*, as is enough to make him willing to go off the stage to make room for others. But this is a piece of wisdom which the *generality* of men are much unacquainted with; and altogether as unwilling to learn. Life to them is so very sweet, and *so pleasant a thing it is to behold the sun*, that they never complain of having too much of it; nay when they are arrived at the age of three-score years and ten, or if they come to four-score years, when all their *strength* is but *labour* and *sorrow*, they scarce ever think that even then they have enough of it; but would



would still have, what they think *the evil day* put off; and if the *world smiles* upon them, they cannot forbear thinking it good *for them always to be here*. But a *fore affliction* (which is undoubtedly a good friend to such men) presently *changes* this goodly scene of *sweet delights* into a *vale of misery*, and forces them, for their own ease and quietness sake, to wish for a retreat and *an end* to their labours. And this naturally leads them to the thought of *another life*; and makes them look out for *a more enduring substance*, a more perfect happiness, that has none of those allays nor unpleasant mixtures, nor bitter ingredients, which they have met with in all their *enjoyments* here upon earth.

AND when this consideration is well wrought into their minds, it will quash all the *temptations* of this world, and lay them dead at their feet; it will make them sit *easy* under all the changes and chances of *life*, and *undisturbed* at the approach of *death*. Whether the world smiles or frowns upon them, will be a matter very *indifferent* to them, since those things cannot affect the *conscience*, nor add to, or diminish the tranquillity of their minds, which rests upon an *anchor sure and stedfast*, and has all its hopes and all its happiness built upon a *rock* that can *never* be *shaken*. So that when matters go at the worst with them, this will still be the inward language of their souls, *we are troubled on every side, but not distressed; we are perplexed, but not*

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*in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroy'd; for this will still be their comfort, that death will shortly remove them into a better place, where all tears shall be wiped from their eyes, and trouble and sorrow shall be no more. Again,*

IV. FOURTHLY, GOD's *faithfulness* in *afflicting* us appears, in that hereby he *instructs* and *trains us up* in the exercise of those *virtues* and *graces*, which are the true and proper qualifications for *eternal happiness*. *Tribulation*, which is the trial of our faith, *worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of GOD is shed abroad in our hearts* \*. Whilst we live in ease we find little occasion for these virtues, and they are apt to grow *feeble* for want of exercise, and are in danger of being choaked by the great number of weeds that grow up with them, or become wild, and run into pride and obstinacy, into a careless *neglect*, or morose, sullen *contempt* of GOD and goodness. But *afflictions* cut off all these *incumbrances*, and make *all those virtues* grow *afresh* in us, and recover their primitive lustre and brightness.

FREQUENT TROUBLES, and sore calamities, demonstrate to us, the absolute necessity of *patience* to support our minds under the heavy load they lay upon us; *riches* exchanged

\* Rom. v. 3, 4, 5.

on a sudden for *meanness* and *poverty*, teaches us that *humility* is not only a very becoming ornament, but a piece of *wise policy* in men who have so uncertain a tenure of what they possess. Great losses in a family shews men plainly, that the best lesson they can learn, is, —in *whatsoever state* they are, *therewith to be content*. When great part of what we have, is violently taken from us, this is a fair warning to make a better use of, and be more thankful to GOD for *that which is still left*. A great and grievous sickness, is an evident proof, and strikes us through with conviction, that GOD above all things is to be feared and loved, and hoped in, since on him alone depend *the issues of life and death*.

AND all these considerations put together, fully instruct us, from our own *sad experience*, to be *kind*, and *tender-hearted*, and compassionately assisting to all those that are in *adversity*. The author to the *Hebrews* tells us, that our *Saviour* himself as a man, (though without sin) learned obedience by the things that he suffered. And became a merciful High-priest, sensibly touched with a feeling of our infirmities; for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted; he is able to succour them that are tempted \*. But moreover,

V. LASTLY, As afflictions stir up in us a great many good qualities, and brighten our vir-

\* Heb. ii. ult.



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*tues*; so they afford a very ample trial of our *sincerity* in all graces whatsoever. GOD *afflicts* us in very *faithfulness*, to make us true and *faithful* to ourselves. In a *prosperous* and easy condition, we are apt to be very ignorant of ourselves; we commonly *mistake* the *true state* of our souls, and imagine ourselves much *better Christians* than we really are. A meer *form of godliness* contents us, *without the power of it*; and a fair *outside show* of *piety*, shall keep up our credit in the world, and thereby impose upon ourselves at the same time that we deceive others. We then appear to ourselves to be of a very *patient* temper, and really think ourselves to be so, because we have few or no *provocations* to the contrary; we receive kindly the addresses of others who care and compliment us, and this passes for a certain instance of our *humility*; and what wonder is it if we shew signs of *contentment*, when *success* answers all our desires, and every thing conspires to render us *contented*? And how can we chuse but pretend to *love GOD* and thankfully acknowledge his *PROVIDENCE*, while *his candle shines upon our beads*, as *Job* speaks \*; and we enjoy from him all the *comforts* and all the  *blessings* of life? But there may be a great deal of *hypocrisy* in all this, though perhaps we are not aware of it, so *deceitful above all things are our hearts*, in prosperity, that we ourselves *do not know them*.

\* Job xxix. 3.

But

But *afflictions* and *troubles* search deep into *things*, and make a full discovery of the *heart* and *affections* of men, laying them naked and open to themselves, and to all the world, to see and judge of the truth and sincerity of their pretences.

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*Nam vero voces tum demum pectore ab imo  
Eliciuntur & eripitur persona, manet Res.*

LUCRET.

For then men speak the true language of their soul from the *bottom* of their hearts, and the mask being taken off, they appear as they really are. And therefore *Satan* when he had nothing else to alledge against *Job*, charged him with *hypocrisy*; that all his *piety* was owing to his *prosperity*; and required that he might be tried by *sufferings*, as being the only proper test of *sincerity*. Doth *Job* fear *GOD* for nought? Hast not thou made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath? on every side thou hast blessed the work of his hands; and his substance is increased in the land; but put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse thee to thy face\*. The event indeed shewed *JOB* to be really what he pretended, and that what *Satan* suggested was a base calumny upon him: But however the Devil himself was thus far in the right, and he has had too long experience of men's tempers, not

\* Job i. 9, 10, 11.

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to observe it, that *prosperity* is not a sufficient *trial* of men's *goodness*, but that 'tis *affliction* must shew what they are made of.

AND INDEED it is well for the world that there are such *distinguishing trials* in it, as *afflictions* are, which make *vain pretenders* to goodness, see themselves and be *ashamed*, and clearly vindicate the *integrity* of truly good and *upright* men, from the vile aspersions of *scoffers* and *atheists*, letting them see plainly that *all religion* is not *hypocrisy*, and that if some men *forsake* it upon the trial, 'tis because they never *heartily embraced* it; since there is such a thing as *real goodness* in others, that holds out to the last, that scorns to be *mercenary*, that borrows none of its lustre from the *ease* and softness of worldly enjoyments, but is ever the same, and shines brightest under all the *discouragements* and surprizing shocks of *adversity*. So that *afflictions* do manifestly tend to the *advantage* of *religion* in several respects:

I. FIRST, In that they greatly promote the honour of GOD, by an open demonstration of the *life* and *power* of our *faith*; and the *stedfastness* of our *hope*, and the *fervency* of our *love* and *zeal* towards him. For when these virtues stick by us in the *worst of times*, and (when all other supports fail) keep up the *peace* and *tranquillity* of our minds, against all the *difficulties* and *distresses* that befall us; this plainly shews that *true religion* is a PRINCIPLE in a man, that inspires him with the *best* and most



most *useful courage*, that gives him the compleatest *mastery* over his passions, the greatest *vigour* of *soul*, and the most *heroick fortitude* in the world. This is a manifest proof that *real goodness* and *virtue* carry in them the most *valuable comforts*; such an everlasting *spring* of *joy* and *refreshment* to the mind, as all the world cannot give. When the world sees us *blefs* GOD, and *adore* his *justice*, and *confess* his *goodness* at the same time that we are *stricken* of him, and *afflicted*; that we *cheerfully depend* upon him when he seems to *forsake* us, this clearly vindicates the cause of GOD, and *apologizes* for the difficulties of *Providence*; it shews that we have still great and strong reasons within us not to cast away our confidence in him, and that he supplies us with *inward comforts*, which the world knows nothing of.

THIS SHEWS that we serve a good and *gracious* Master, who, we are sure, will abundantly make amends for all our sufferings, whose favour is more dear to us than all the world, and *his loving-kindness better than life itself*. And if there be any thing that *can* convince *lewd* and *prophane* livers, of the truth and reality of our profession; that there is a GOD and *Providence* that over-looks us; that to be *really good* is to be *really happy*; that a *good conscience* is the *best security*, the strongest confidence, the most comfortable retreat and safest protection; this certainly must do it, when they see us *manfully fight* the *good fight* of *afflictions*.

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*afflictions*, and that we can bear up under worldly *calamities*, and *diseases*, and even *death* itself, with a *patient* and chearful mind; being perfectly free from that *amazing guilt*, that *stinging remorse*, and those *self-condemning thoughts*, which such men themselves ever feel at such times, and languish and despair under. For this calls up a witness from their own hearts, to testify the miracles of a *divine faith*, and declare the triumphs of a *lively hope*; and plainly forces their guilty minds to confess, that nothing is so *mean-spirited*, and helpless, in the needful time of trouble, as *vice* is; nothing so *brave*, and victorious as *virtue*: And that *GOD* is in us of a very truth.

2. SECONDLY, As the *afflictions* of good men do greatly advance the *glory* of *GOD* and the *honour* of *religion*, so they do mightily add to the comfort and satisfaction of their own minds, as to the truth and *sincerity* of their *intentions*. For altho' a good man may be very conscious to himself at all times, and be well assured of the *integrity* and *uprightness* of his own heart, without such a severe trial; and even while he lives in ease and *prosperity*; yet 'tis certain, that this gives him the clearest, and most *infallible* proof of it: Because *afflictions* remove all the grounds of *suspicion*; all the *false hopes* and *fears* arising from *temporal* considerations, which give a *religious gloss* to the lives of some men, and are the usual *shelter* for *insincerity* and *hypocrisy*. For he that can

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stick to *naked goodness* when 'tis oppress'd, and strip'd of all worldly support and encouragements, must undoubtedly do it in *sincerity* and truth: For 'tis plain that he can have no other *principle* to do it upon, but only because *he loves it*. And hereby we may *assure our hearts before GOD*, and have a strong confidence towards him, that we *love him above all things*, since nothing that we can suffer, *neither tribulation, nor distress, — nor peril, nor persecution, nor death itself, can separate us from it* \*.

AND IDEED when a man has past the trial of *both sides of fortune*, and felt the *best and the worst* that the world can do unto him, and finds himself still *the same*, this will not let him in the least *doubt* of his *sincerity*; but it makes even *humility itself* gather confidence, for *this is his rejoicing the testimony of a good conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, he has had his conversation in the world* †. And did good men reap no other benefit from their *afflictions* than this 'twould be great *faithfulness* in GOD to exercise them therewith, if 'twere only to let them *know themselves* the better, and acquaint them thereby with that peace and *satisfaction* of mind, which naturally results from a full assurance of the *truth* and *sincerity* of their own hearts.

\* Rom. viii. 36. † 2 Cor. i. 12.

AND



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AND now I have dispatched at large the two general considerations which the text proposes to us: That all our *afflictions* are from GOD; and that they serve to very wise ends and purposes.

ALL the *Conclusion* which I shall make from what has been said, shall be briefly to exhort all *Christians* seriously to *consider* of these things, and often to *meditate* upon them, that they may not be *surprized* by them, or at a loss how to behave themselves, in such difficult circumstances, but may be provided with such a steady principle, as may enable them to bear up *under them* with that *decency* of behaviour that becomes *Christians*.

YOU ARE perhaps at present easy and in health, and enjoy all the *pleasure* of a *prosperous* state and condition; but you cannot be so ignorant of the *mutability* of human affairs as to expect this should last always: And you cannot know how soon the *scene* may *change*, and turn all this your *mirth* into *heaviness*: And the more you have put off the evil day from you, and thrust it out of your thoughts, when you had leisure and opportunity to provide against it, the *heavier* will it fall when it does come, and prove so much the more *insupportable*. For *affliction* will be heard and considered by us, when it does come, whether we will or no; and it must be a melancholick consideration to us, if we have treasured up no stock of Comforts against

*inflicted for the Benefit of Man.*

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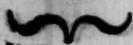
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gainst that sad and gloomy season, but have only a guilty conscience and a *wounded spirit* at that time to support us. *The spirit of a man will bear his infirmities*, says Solomon; that, is a *sound mind* and good conscience are great succours to a man in his *calamities*; and be they never so great, will keep him from sinking under them: *But a wounded spirit who can bear* \*? When his *comforter* is his *tormentor*; when *that spirit* that should sustain the man, is not able to sustain *itself*, when a sick *body*, and a sick *mind* are joined together, the burthen must needs be very grievous, *who can bear it*? For the *foundation* of a man's comfort in such a case, is undermined, and all his *hopes* perish.

AND IF in that extremity he lifts up his eyes to *Heaven* for relief, *to the hills* from whence only help can come, it must be sure with the greatest *shame* and *confusion of face*, and in a deep sense of what an evil and bitter thing it is to *forget GOD* in *prosperity*, and then only to seek him when *trouble* and heaviness are on every side, and plainly force him to remember him. So that 'tis a very vain and *foolish error* men are generally guilty of, to think that in *prosperity* the best thing they can do, is to cheer their hearts, and live in hopes that *to-morrow shall be as this day*, and much more abundant; that to consider *afflictions*, is needlessly to disturb their present ease and tran-

\* Prov. xvi. 4.

quillity,

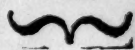
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quillity, and to *antedate* those *miseries*, which perhaps may never come, and therefore that 'tis sufficient to leave time and chance to provide against them.

FOR after all, *afflictions* are no such *uncertainties* in a mortal state, that we should hope *always* to escape them; they are indeed the very condition of our natures, and cannot possibly be *entirely* avoided; for, put the case at the best, *sickness* and *death* must be *necessarily* our portion; and therefore what disturbance can it be to a *wise man* to consider upon what bottom he stands; and prudently *provide* against the *worst* that can befall him. Would our not thinking of these things *keep* them *off* from us, or our thinking of them bring them *ever the sooner* upon us, there would be some reason then not to *fix our thoughts* upon them; but since they will come without thinking of them, and whether we will or no, and many times seize us when we think ourselves secure against them, 'tis manifestly the most prudent course we can take, to think seriously of them *beforehand*; and put ourselves *betimes* into a due proper posture to receive them. For frequent *meditating* upon *afflictions*, has plainly this advantage in it, that it renders the thoughts of them *familiar* to us; and reconciles us to them, in a good measure, before they come; and furnishes us with many good reasons which mightily abate the smart and terror of them.

AND





AND such meditations as these, are so far from being a damp on our spirits, or any abatement of our present comforts, that they really make our afflictions fit the easier upon us, by letting us understand the true use and value of them. For they teach us to be moderate and regular in our desires of the comforts of this life; to cut off all extravagant pursuits of them; to be very reasonable in our hopes and fears concerning them; to enjoy them as they ought to be enjoy'd, with humility and thankfulness, and with a preparation of mind to part with them, when GOD who gave them, thinks fit to take them away.

AND thus when afflictions come, we shall think no strange thing has happened unto us; no more indeed than what we always expected; and so receiving evil with the same temper of mind that we have received good, we shall find it no difficulty to commit the keeping of our souls to GOD, in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator, and glorify him in the words of the Psalmist — *I know, O LORD, that thy Judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*

Now to GOD the FATHER, GOD the SON, and GOD the HOLY GHOST, be ascribed all honour and praise, the kingdom, the power, the Glory for ever and ever. Amen.

instructed for the benefit of all

And such wisdom as is to be  
our being a hand on our spirit, or any  
of our present concerns, that may  
make our affliction in the way upon  
our being as comfortable as the way and  
of it. For they teach us to be  
and rejoice in our deliverance of the con-  
fession of this life, to cast off all extraneous  
of them, to be very reasonable in our  
and less conceiving them, to enjoy  
as they ought to be enjoyed, with an  
and thankfulness, and with a perfect  
of mind to part with them, when GOD  
gives them, I think fit to make them  
to be content with what GOD will  
and thus when wisdom comes we shall  
find no thing that has happened unto us  
more indeed than what we always ex-  
pected, and so receiving even with the same  
of mind that we have received good, we  
shall find it no difficulty to commit the keep-  
ing of ourselves to GOD, in well-doing as  
unto a Father, Creator, and glorify him in the  
words of the Psalmist — I know, O LORD,  
that thy judgments are right, and that thou art  
just to GOD FATHER, GOD SON,  
and GOD the HOLY GHOST, who  
governs all power and might, the King of  
the power, the Glory for ever and ever. Amen.

# SERMON VII.

## The Duty of CHRISTIANS in hearing SERMONS.

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LUKE viii. 18. former part.

*Take heed therefore how ye hear.*

THESE words are spoken by our Saviour SERMON  
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to his *disciples*, after he had, at their request, explained to them the *parable* of the Sower. He tells them, ver. 16. *No Man when he hath lighted a candle covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed, but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.* By which he intimates, that he did not communicate this knowledge to them for their *private* benefit only, but that he might thereby make them *fit* to communicate to others, what they were taught by him, and therefore, that they should not hide their *talents*; but as they received the light of *divine* knowledge

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knowledge from him, so they should shew forth *that* light to others; they should freely and liberally *communicate* that wisdom which they were endued with, to the *edification* of all men. Because as he goes on, at the 17th verse, *Nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest, neither any thing hid that shall not be known, and come abroad*: That is, nothing was committed as a *secret* to them, not to be disclosed; but whatever *mystery*, whatever *truth* of religion, hitherto a *secret*, should now be *revealed* to them, was therefore revealed that they might be the *teachers* of it to the rest of the world: Then follow the words of the *text*: *Take heed therefore how you hear*: That is; It becomes you whom I have chosen for my *Apostles* to take care in what manner, and with what *affections* of mind you *hear*; because you are hearers, not for your selves only, but for the whole world; for I intend that by you my doctrine and the *scheme* and method of *man's salvation* shall be published to all men.

Now these words were indeed spoken, as you see, by our *Saviour*, particularly to his *Apostles*, and they contain matter of instruction to *them*, how *they* should behave themselves under the advantages they had of his heavenly conversation. But they may be also understood in a more *general* sense; as directing *all Christians* whatsoever to *take heed how they hear*. For 'tis certain that the *Apostles* by

by these words were admonish'd, not only to SERMON  
*retain* the instructions they received, that they VII.  
 might be able to *deliver* them to others,   
 but that they might be influenced by them  
 themselves; that, at the same time that they  
*taught others*, they might themselves be  
 duly affected with what they taught, and  
 might make the doctrines which they de-  
 livered to others, become the *fruitful seeds*  
 of *virtue* and *holiness* in themselves, spring-  
 ing up in all the *graces* of a truly *Christian*  
*life*. And this is the cause, why the precept  
 of our *Saviour* in the *text* tho' spoken to the  
*Apostles* could not be intended for *them* only,  
 because the reason of it holds good at all  
 times, and is of force in every case, where  
 the means of *edification*, and spiritual improve-  
 ment are to be had.

ACCORDINGLY, I shall understand the words  
 of the *text* as containing in them a *general di-*  
*rection to all men* to take special heed to  
 themselves, in what manner they use the op-  
 portunities and means of *faith* and *knowledge*,  
 that GOD has put into their hands, lest  
 they suffer the penalty threatned in the words  
 that follow the *text*, and that be *taken away*  
*from them which they seem already to have*.  
 And because the most eminent means that  
*Christians* have of being instructed in the grand  
 truths of *religion*, are by *hearing* the *word* of  
 GOD, from the mouths of the Clergy, in the  
 publick assemblies; I think I may very justly

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accommodate the words of the *text* to this case, and understand them as directing us to *take heed how we hear* the word of GOD thus delivered to us.

I DESIGN therefore, in farther discoursing upon these words, to state the *duty* of *Christians* in this point of *hearing sermons*, and to shew the *importance* of it, and to warn them to be careful not to turn to their *hurt* what is so wisely fitted for their *spiritual advantage*. And,

I. FIRST, All persons should come to the publick assemblies to *hear* the word of GOD preached, with a *docile* and *tractable* disposition, with a *modest* and *humble mind*.

II. SECONDLY, They should come with an *awful* regard to what is delivered, under the sense of its coming from *one* who has GOD's *commission*.

III. THIRDLY, They should above all things, be careful not to abuse so *gracious* an *institution*, by watching occasions of exposing either the *real* or *supposed* failings of those, who are thus entrusted with GOD's *commission* for the instruction of *Christians*.

IV. FOURTHLY, They should attend this holy *ordinance* so, as to treasure up in their *hearts*, whatever they hear, whereby either  
their



their *understandings* are improved, or their *affections* well and wisely directed. And

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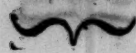
V. FIFTHTY, That they should make the right *use* and *improvement* of this  *blessing*, by becoming sincere *doers* of the word and not *hearers* only.

I. FIRST, All persons should come to the public *assemblies* to *hear* the word of GOD preached, with a *docile* and *tractable* disposition, with a *modest* and *humble* mind.

OUR blessed Saviour who *knew what was in man*, and how difficult it is for sinners to bring themselves to the knowledge and obedience of what *thwarts* their inclinations, and *controuls* their lusts, has been in his infinite wisdom pleased to set apart an *order* of men, with a particular *commission* to teach the laws and doctrines of the *Gospel*, and enforce the obligations to duty, and to promise *his* assistance in their discharge of this as well as every other part of their *office*, even to the end of the world. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo I am with you alway even unto the end of the world \*.

Now if it be from hence incumbent upon the *ministers* of CHRIST faithfully to instruct

\* Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.



others in the truths of the *Gospel*, and the rules of obedience, it must on the other hand, be the duty of all *Christians*, to yield themselves willing *disciples*, and neither to refuse the assembling together in order for *instruction*, nor to defeat the design of assembling, by perverseness and obstinacy. It is therefore one undoubted branch of the duty of *Christians* to attend the *publick service*, so as not to think themselves unconcerned in the exhortations and reproofs of the *teachers*.

To this end, it should be their constant endeavour to subdue the *motions* of *pride*, with which the more knowing and learned are too commonly puffed up; and to possess themselves with a *belief*, that, what has GOD's *authority* in the appointment, will not want his  *blessing* for securing the effect proposed; and consequently that *unlikely* means may sometimes be the real cause of great and *surprizing* improvement. And indeed, *they* have studied to little purpose, and *their* very learning and parts are become *sin* and a *snare* to them, who *swell* with a vain opinion of being above receiving benefit from the appointed means of instruction. For 'tis as much the *office* of a *preacher* to remind his *bearers* of what they already know, and to quicken them to the discharge of *plain duties*, as to teach them *doctrines* that are new. And he is as truly, and to as good purpose instructed, who is awakened to a sense of *sin*, and a resolution of amendment, as he

who

who receives information concerning an *article of faith*. SERMON  
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INDEED in a *Christian* country, where children are taught the *principles* of religion from their *infancy*, and are furnished, generally very early, with the knowledge of what is to be believed and practised; the *duty* of a *preacher*, is somewhat different from what it was in the first ages of *Christianity*, when the number of instructors was small, and the chief way of learning, even the *rudiments* of *Christianity*, was from the publick preaching of the *Apostles*, and those they appointed to the work. In those days, the *mysteries* of the *Gospel*, the doctrine of GOD *incarnate*, and a crucified *Saviour*, and the design, necessity, manner, and extent of the redemption by CHRIST's blood, were to be *chiefly* inculcated, when men grown old in absurdity and error, and quite unacquainted with the *scheme* of man's *salvation* were the *bearers*.

BUT afterwards, when the *revelation* of GOD's will was committed to writing, and the *holy Scriptures* were open to every body, and the doctrines therein contained might be learned with the *alphabet*, there seemed not then, much less does there now seem, so great occasion of constantly explaining the *articles of faith*, as of urging the obligations to holiness, and of persuading men to consider in time, and be wise. Not that any one of common *understanding*, and tolerable *edu-*  
cation,





cation, needs such repeated instructions in these points from any difficulty that there is in them or any incapacity that he is under of retaining what he has been once well taught; but because through the wiles of Satan, the temptations of the world, and the deceitfulness of men's hearts, spiritual considerations are apt to lose all power and influence upon men, who are not frequently stirred up and awakened to a remembrance of what, though they know, they seldom give themselves the trouble of reflecting upon.

FOR it is an agreed, though a sad and melancholic truth, that men's knowledge and learning are no sort of security to the integrity of their hearts, or the purity and innocence of their manners. And what was anciently observed \*, continues still true, "That persons skilled in arts and sciences, are in no way of becoming better men than others; and that they do not less mistake concerning good and evil than other people, nor are less subject to all kinds of vice: Forasmuch as a man's learning (though he should be supposed to be a perfect master of the

\* Ζ. Πότερον ἔστιν προέχοντες οἱ μαθηματικοί, πρὸς τὸ βελτίως γινώσκειν τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων;

Γ. Πῶς μάλιστα προέχουσιν ἐπιστὰς φαίνονται ἡπαισμένοι περὶ ἀγαθῶν καὶ κακῶν ὡς αὖτις οἱ ἄλλοι, καὶ ἔτι κατεχόμενοι ὑπὸ πάσης κακίας; Οὐδὲν γὰρ καλεῖται εἰδέναι μὲν γράμματα, καὶ κατελεγεῖν τὰ μαθήματα πάντα, ὁμοίως δὲ, μέθυσον καὶ ἀκρατὴ εἶναι, καὶ φιλαργύρον, καὶ ἀδίκον, καὶ προδοτὴν, καὶ τὸ τέρας ἀφρονεῖν.

Ceb. Theban. Tab. p. 73. Edit. Johnson.

" sciences)

"*sciences*) will not prevent his being also a **SERMON**  
 "drunkard, incontinent, covetous, unjust, treach- **VII.**  
 "erous, and lastly a very mad-man."

So that upon the whole it appears, that there is a like necessity that all men should listen to the advice of persons *authorized* to give it; and that no advantages of *education* and *learning*, no strength of *judgment*, or *vivacity* of *wit*, can set a man above receiving improvement from *such* instructions, but that all persons will stand equally obliged to a patient *attention* to them, so long as the *ministers* of **CHRIST** continue obliged to *exhort* and *rebuke* with *all authority*, and so long as the passions and prejudices of *some* men, and the listlessness and indolence of *others* continue to influence them even against their *own* reason and conviction.

II. **SECONDLY**, *Christians* should come to the publick assemblies with an awful regard to what is delivered there, under the sense of its coming from *one*, who acts by **GOD's** *commission*.

**THIS** is a matter too little considered by most *bearers*. Men are apt to proportion their *regard*, to rise or fall in their *reverence* for what is spoken, according to the opinion they have of the *speaker*. But in this they do not follow the direction of the *text*. For an *appointment* of **GOD**, is, upon that score alone, entitled to *respect*. And in the case before

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fore us; this is that which is above all to be regarded; for it is *GOD's blessing* alone that can sanctify *any* instructions whatever, and make them operate for the benefit of the *bearers*. Indeed *preaching* is a *natural* means of instruction, and may by its own tendency be helpful towards teaching men to know themselves and their duty. Yet it owes its power of acting with a *saving* effect, and as a *means* of *grace* entirely to the *commission* of *CHRIST*, given to the *Apostles* and their *successors*.

AND herein this *ordinance* of *preaching* does partake of the nature of the *two sacraments*, that is, it has its effect upon the *bearers* for their spiritual benefit, through, and upon the account of the promises of *GOD alone*. And accordingly the *water* in *one sacrament*, and the *bread* and *wine* in the *other*, are not, in themselves, less capable of conveying *pardon* of sin, and procuring an union and *communion* with *CHRIST*, than *preaching* is in *itself*, and through its own proper power, the means of *converting* the *heart* and *overruling* the *affections*. These wonderful and beneficial effects are in one case as well as the other the *intire* and absolute *gifts* of *CHRIST*, in virtue of his promise of being with his *ministers* to the end of the world.

THIS then being the case, a distinction is plainly to be made between the *authority* that results from the sacred *commission*, and what arises from the *personal qualifications* of him who has it; and

it



it appears that men may have a right of being attended to with *awe* and *respect*, upon the account of *one*, who can by no means challenge the same upon the account of the *other*. For it must be allowed that *holy orders* are no absolute *security* against the power of temptations any more than *philosophy* is, and that learning and science are acquired by the *Clergy*, in the *same* way and by the *same* methods that they are by others. Since then there must be a mighty difference in the qualifications of different persons among the *Clergy*, as well as among men of every other order and degree, 'tis most evident, that if the *influence* of any holy *Ordinance* [that of *preaching* for the purpose] did depend either upon the parts or learning, or indeed *goodness* and virtue of the *minister*, there must have been some intimations in *Scripture*, that *Christians* should look out for *ministers* of the best *endowments*, and be careful in the search after, and choice of such, as a matter of consequence to their own *salvation*.

AND yet, there is not only nothing of that kind to be met with in *Scripture*, but just on the contrary our blessed *Saviour* charges the *Jews* and his *disciples* among them, *to observe and to do all that the Scribes and Pharisees bid them observe\**, and that without distinction or preference of one before another, upon the account of any supposed personal excellencies, but for this reason, because they *sat in Moses's seat*, and had

\* Matt. xxiii. 1, 2, 3, &c.

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the publick power of the Church, for the instruction of the people. And St. Paul puts the power of exercising the office of a *preacher* upon the sole point of a *commission* thereunto; *How shall they bear*, says he, *without a preacher*; and *how shall they PREACH*, except they be SENT\*, It is the *commission* then, and that alone, which gives energy to the best *compositions*, and where the *authority* of *that* is not wanting, *unlikely* means will produce *surprizing* effects. Let not any *Christian* then be solicitous concerning the excellency of the endowments of *him*, whom GOD in his Providence over his *Church*, has appointed his instructor, and let him not doubt of GOD's making *those means* effectual which are of his own appointing, and accordingly let him receive the word of GOD with awe and reverence from the mouth of his true and *lawful* minister, firmly believing, that a *ready submission* to GOD's institutions, will ever be followed by his blessing.

III. THIRDLY, *Christians* should above all things be careful not to abuse so *gracious* an institution, by watching for occasions of exposing either the *real* or *supposed* failings of those who are thus intrusted with GOD's *commission* for the instruction of *Christians*.

THIS is doubtless the duty of all men, but how little it is observed and practised, is too well known. Before the *reformation* of

\* Rom. x. 14, 15, &c.

our Church from Popery, one great and just complaint among others, was, of the want of *preaching*. And the usefulness and advantage of that ordinance, as well to procure a *reformation*, as to preserve *orthodoxy* of faith, and *purity* of worship and manners, were with reason proclaimed. But now, though men are as earnest as ever in exacting the labour from the *Clergy*, yet it has lost much of its ancient power among men, and *few* seem to value it as an *ordinance* of GOD, or the promised means of *grace* and improvement. It is really treated by many, as if they looked upon it as no other than a kind of *task* upon the *Clergy*, and a trial of their abilities, but that the *auditors* are no otherwise concern'd than as *judges*. That the *preacher* indeed is to *prepare* himself suitably to the *solemnity* of the occasion, and the *dignity* of the subject treated of, and that he must therefore neglect no art to keep up the *attention* of the *audience*; but that his *bearers* have no more to do but to determine upon the *merits* of the performance.

BUT to such *bearers* as these, the advice of my *text* is most seasonable. For surely no persons living can make a worse use of the *advantages* they enjoy, or can act in greater opposition to our Saviour's design in this his *institution*. For what discouragement does every *preacher* lye under, from his being thus exposed by every discourse he makes to the censorious



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serious remarks of his *bearers*. What *Tully* has observed upon the point of speaking in public, may be fitly applied to the present subject. “ \* It is a great *burthen* and *task* for “ a man to undertake and *profess* to be *singly* “ heard (all others keeping *silence*) in a numerous assembly, concerning matters of the “ greatest importance ; for there is hardly any one present, who does not discern the “ *faults* of the *speaker*, quicker and sharper than “ he does the *excellencies* : And so it happens, that, if there be any thing said, that “ gives offence, it will destroy the *merit* even “ of what deserves *commendation*.” This is but a natural effect of that *just liberty*, that every one has of passing his *judgment* upon what he hears from the mouths of those who profess to speak their *own sentiments* only, and pretend no *authority*, but that of their *own reason* ; nor claim to be regarded in respect of any power or *commission* from a *superior*. But when men act as *ambassadors between* GOD and man, and demand to be heard in right of their *commission*, they may justly plead an exemption from being so *freely* dealt with, and

\* Magnum quoddam est onus, atque munus, suscipere atque profiteri, se esse, omnibus silentibus, unum maximis de rebus, magno in conventu hominum, audiendum ; ad-est enim fere nemo, quin acutius atque acius vitia in dicente quam recta videat, ita quicquid est, in quo offenditur, id etiam illa quæ laudanda sunt, obruit. *Tull. de orat. Lib. i. c. 25. Edit. Gronov.*

may

may insist upon being heard with *attention* and respect whilst they deliver the message with which they are charged.

THE *task* of speaking in publick is difficult enough (tho' no one knows it sufficiently who has not try'd it) from the *awe* of a large *assembly*, and the very *dread* of being *alone* to be heard, whilst *all others are silent*. But if to this be added the much more grievous burthen of being exposed to *reproach* and *ridicule* for every *supposed* infirmity in speaking, the execution of the office of a *preacher* will be looked upon with *terror*, and no expectations of *honour* or *profit* can suffice to balance so great a grievance. Whoever therefore adds this farther burthen to the *sacred office*, does what is in his power to hinder the *execution* of it, and must answer for the guilt of so far hindering the *word of GOD* from having its *free course*, and being *glorified*.

AND indeed, this humour may be found to have a sad influence upon the *morals* of the lower part of mankind: *They* are, generally speaking, of themselves well enough disposed to receive the *word of GOD* with *reverence* from the mouths of their *ministers*: But when they find that very *order of men*, whose *lips should preserve knowledge*, and at whose hands they are to receive the *lively oracles*; when, I say, they find them treated with disrespect and contempt, and especially when their most *serious* discourses composed on purpose for the instructing

ing of the ignorant, are critically descanted upon, and all endeavours used to represent them *weak* and *impertinent*, 'twill be no wonder if *they* turn *criticks* too; and begin to think themselves judges of these performances, and so take upon them to despise the *authority* of their *teacher*, and set at nought his *counsel* and instructions. (But of this enough.)

IV. FOURTHLY, They should attend this *holy ordinance*, so as to treasure up in their *hearts* whatever they hear, whereby either their *understandings* are improved or their *affections* well and wisely directed. And

THIS is needful advice to the best and the most knowing *Christians*; because of the strange power of this world and the various entertainments of it, to draw off men's minds from the serious and awful consideration of the things of the *other*. The impressions which a *grave discourse* from this place may make upon a well disposed mind, will soon lose their power, if some endeavours are not used to retain them. That which *alarmed* all the *faculties* of our souls at the *first* hearing, and excited great *seriousness*, and a hearty resolution of amendment, will soon lose its hold upon us and die away, and vanish, if some care be not taken to cherish the *holy flame*, which was kindled in us. And this is the rather to be done, because, every neglect of these *kind invitations* to duty, is a *new* aggravation of our *guilt*; in as much



much as it is a setting at nought *GOD's counsels* SERMON  
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and despising his reproofs, and is a slight of  
the offers of *his grace and mercy*. But,

V. FIFTHLY and lastly, That they should make the right use and improvement of this blessing; by becoming sincere *doers of the word* and not bearers only.

It will not suffice us *not* to make the ill use of these opportunities, which have been before mentioned; it will not be sufficient for us *not* to ridicule or contemn the word of *GOD*, or the dispensers of it; nor will it indeed suffice, that we receive the word preached with humility and *seriousness*, and with hearty endeavours of retaining what we *hear*, unless we become *doers of the word*. We must take care that these constant and ready means of *instruction* be duly employed, to the happy purposes that are intended by them, that they may become the certain occasions of our being grounded in the *faith*, and of our growing in *grace*, and in the knowledge of our *LORD* and *SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST*, and in a truly *Christian practice*.

If our *religion*, and our care in discharging of *Christian duties*, does not bear some proportion to the *opportunities* we have of improving in *Christian knowledge*, we shall add great weight both to our *guilt*, and to our *punishment*. The will of *GOD* is plainly enough made known in the *holy Scriptures*, to all

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men, who have capacity and leisure to read or hear them. And moreover, (whereby all pretence of ignorance is taken away, even from the most illiterate) it has pleased GOD to appoint an *order* of men, for the explaining the *mysteries* of religion, and enforcing the obligations of *duty*, and the necessity of a good life. These being the *opportunities* of knowledge which every body among us is blest withal, 'tis an equal duty upon all to *repent*, and live agreeably to the *purity* of the Gospel.

FOR 'tis now in the power of all to know their duty, from the least to the greatest. So that if any persons pretend *ignorance*, as to the necessary parts thereof, their *ignorance* is *affected*: 'Tis an ignorance which they have *chosen*: 'Tis an ignorance that proceeds from their own *wilful* and obstinate neglect of the means of knowledge, when they have been laid before them. They are such as Job speaks of \*. *Who say unto GOD, depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*: They are such as *will not see with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, nor understand with their hearts, that they may be converted and healed*. Now such an ignorance will never be of any benefit to a man that thinks to *screen* himself under it; because his *ignorance* is his own fault: He who *perversly* refuses to attain to the knowledge of his *master's* will, when he had so many *opportunities*

\* Job xxi. 14.

of knowing it, is as bad as he that knows it, and refuses to do it.

Now the *aggravation* of men's guilt, from their knowing the will of GOD, and yet neglecting to do it, which is the case of all those who take so little heed *how they hear* the word; that they never become *doers of it*; I say, the *aggravation* of such men's guilt will appear by considering, that a *full* and plain *instruction* in the will of GOD, is a mighty help and spur towards a faithful performing of it.

It was certainly a very great discouragement to the whole *Heathen world*, to be under so great doubts as they were about *spiritual* things: The wisest men among them had attain'd to no *reasonable certainty* about the *future existence* of their souls, much less about the *rewards* and *punishments* of another life: And as to the particular manner how GOD might be *worshipped acceptably*, in this they were profoundly ignorant; whereby they were led, some of them to an absolute neglect of *all* religious *rites*, as not knowing whether they could be serviceable or no: And others, to numberless *absurd rites*, and vain and troublesome, if not *barbarous* superstitions. Now as the unhappy state of these men was justly to be lamented upon the account of that *check* which this their ignorance gave to all pious and *religious* endeavours, so on the same account, is our happiness to be admired, and



GOD's holy Name to be praised, for the advantage which we have of an *infallible* direction in this weighty matter.

FOR we have the word of GOD itself for our guide; wherein the nature of GOD is clearly explained, the *modes* of *worship*, and *means* of *pardon* prescribed, and the *obligations* to duty most powerfully enforced, as well from the *love* of GOD, in the incarnation and death of his SON for our sakes, as from the discovery *there* made of an *unchangeable* state of rewards and punishments in the other world. And that this *revelation* of GOD's will might be known to all, and might have a due influence upon all, that the *man of business* might not pretend a want of time or leisure, nor the *illiterate* pretend the want of parts or learning, for the due discovery of the truths of the *Gospel*; it has pleased GOD, in great compassion to our weakness, to appoint a perpetual *succession* of men, for the sole purpose of being *stewards* of the *mysteries* of GOD, and constant instructors of all men in their duty: To preach the word; to be *instant in season, and out of season*; to *reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine* \*.

Now these are such advantages towards the doing the will of GOD, *such motives* and *incentives* to it, thus distinctly to know his will,

to have it so clearly laid before us in the *Scriptures*, and so constantly urged and prest upon men in publick, that whoever continues *deaf* to such *loud* and importunate calls to *repentance*, must stand condemned as guilty of the most *aggravated sin* and *folly*, and as deserving the severest expressions of GOD's vengeance. For, let us consider farther, that a *neglect* of *duty* in him, who has such clear means of knowing it, is *wilful* and *perverse*, and attended with a downright *contempt*, and scorn of GOD's *authority*.

WHILST the *Heathens* continued in darkness, and the *Jewish* knowledge was obscur'd with *types*, the ignorance that prevailed might be some excuse for the less enormous transgressions of duty. They *might* have pleaded that, though they had some *faint* notions of a future state of rewards and punishments, which *checked* them in their wicked courses, and withheld them from *downright* licentiousness, yet the uncertainty they were still under was a powerful *hindrance* to their patient pursuit after virtue and honour: And that the violence of their passions, and the allurements of sin, so easily got the mastery of those resolutions, which subsisted *only* upon *faint* and doubtful hopes, that they were *insensibly* led away into a life of pleasure and indulgence.

Now if *this plea*, how plausible soever, will by no means amount to an excuse for *Heathens*, how much more inexcusable are *we* for our sins, when GOD has been pleased expres-

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ly to declare his mind to us upon the matter. What was a slight offence in the *Heathens*, who knew so little, is a *monstrous crime* in a *Christian*, who has had a revelation made to him of the whole Counsel of GOD: For our neglect of our *duty* to GOD is wilful; and so we do *not only sin*, but *insult* also; we do not only *transgress* GOD's laws, but do *scorn* and *contemn* the author of them too. This must certainly shut men out from all *possibility* of favour; for what can be pleaded in abatement of that guilt which is contracted by offences against one whom we *wilfully provoke*, at the same time that we know his power to be uncontrollable.

LET us then be prevailed upon to consider seriously of these things, that our  *blessings* may not prove a *curse* to us; and what was intended for our *benefit* and happiness may not add weight to our guilt, and increase our *damnation*. Our Saviour denounced a woe against *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida* \*, because they did not *repent* upon the *mighty works* which were done in them. And he farther declared, that it should be more tollerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for them: Now there is very little difference between them and us, between *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida* and *Christians*, as to the evidences of a future state, and the means and opportunities of conviction.

\* Matt. xi. 21, 22.



WE have the *Scriptures* always ready at hand, the word of GOD is open before us; we have it continually read and explained unto us; and we are reminded of our duty, by frequent exhortations; and all this ought as effectually to persuade us, as the *mighty works* of our *Saviour* ought to have persuaded those of *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida*. For though we can't see those miracles done, as they did, yet we are as sure of their having been done, as they were who saw them. And we have one advantage which they had not, and that is, we know the *success* of them, and that by the *means* of those *miracles* the doctrine of CHRIST has in a wonderful manner spread through the world, with an unspeakable *swiftness* by the preaching of a *few illiterate fishermen* and *mechanicks*, in defiance of all the *united powers* of men and devils, and this without *art* or *stratagem*.

NAY, we have this farther advantage of the inhabitants of *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida*, that we have not those *prejudices* against *Christianity* to contend with, which they had, in favour of a *religion* given by GOD, supported by *miracles*, and believed to have been designed to continue to the end of the world. But we, on the contrary, have been taught the *truth as it is in JESUS* from our *infancy*; we have believed its *divinity* from our *tenderest* years; so that we are so far from having any *prejudices* of *education* to struggle with, so far from being obliged to depart

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from the *belief* of our *forefathers*, that we have nothing to do, but to comply with the *bias* of our own minds, and with the weight and authority of our own education; and we cannot but see the reasonableness of the *religion* which we learned from our *infancy*, and readily own the obligation of its rules and directions.

IF we then are not influenced by such powerful motives, how terrible must our condemnation be? It will be much more tolerable even for *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida*, at the day of judgment, than for us; because they were not blest with such advantages of light and knowledge as we are. *He that despised Moses's law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses; but of how much sorer punishment think ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath troden under foot the Son of GOD, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctify'd an unholy thing; and hath done despite unto the spirit of Grace \*?*

IF after so plain a revelation of GOD's will, after so many, and so earnest calls and invitations to repentance, such rewards offered to the obedient, such threats denounced against the stubborn and rebellious; I say, if after so full a declaration of GOD's will in the *holy Scripture*, and the frequent urging and inculcating it upon our minds by his *ministers*, men will

\* Heb. x. 28.

still dare to be wicked and disobedient, as they can plead nothing for their excuse, so it cannot be thought, but that the severest expressions of GOD's *vengeance* and *fury* will be poured out upon them. *But beloved we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak\**. However, 'tis a matter of the greatest importance to us to *hear* as we ought; and therefore permit me to remind you of St. Paul's advice †, with which I conclude. *Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*

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Now to GOD the FATHER, GOD the SON, and GOD the HOLY GHOST, be ascribed all power and glory, adoration and worship, now and for ever. *Amen.*

\* Heb. vi. 9. † 2 Cor. x. 12.

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will have to be wicked and disobedient, as  
 they cannot be anything for their excuse is it  
 cannot be thought, but that the fearful ex-  
 positions of GOD's vengeance and fury will  
 be poured out upon them. But should we  
 not perhaps, before things of you, and things  
 that are going on in the world, and things  
 however, the manner of the general in-  
 junctions in us to hear as we ought, and  
 to let them in to remind you of St. Paul's  
 exhortation, which I conclude. Let him  
 that is of the Church take heed to be full.

Now to GOD the Father, GOD the  
 Son, and GOD the Holy Ghost, be ascrip-  
 tion of all power and glory, adoration and wor-  
 ship, now and for ever. Amen.

1 Cor. x. 16. & 17. & 18.

1 Cor. x. 16. & 17. & 18.

1 Cor. x. 16. & 17. & 18.

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# SERMON VIII.

GOD's delaying Punishment  
no just Reason for Man's de-  
laying Repentance.

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ECCL. viii. 11.

*Because sentence against an evil work  
is not executed speedily, therefore the  
heart of the sons of men is fully set  
in them to do evil.*

**A**MONG the many objections made a-  
gainst a divine *Providence* by scoffers  
and prophane persons, whose design and  
business it is to expose *religion* to the scorn and  
contempt of the world, there is none more *plau-  
sible*, or has met with better success in the  
minds of men, to encourage them in their  
wicked courses, than this, which is here alledg-  
ed by the *Royal Preacher*, viz. The impunity  
of evil doers. *Because sentence, &c.* “ We  
“ see

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“ see no reason, say they, why we shou’d  
 “ not meet with as favourable dealing as o-  
 “ ther men; since therefore *their* impieties  
 “ have not been chastised by the judgments  
 “ so often threatned against offenders, why  
 “ may not *we* also have the same success,  
 “ and after a life spent in lewdness and de-  
 “ bauchery, *descend* at last to *our* graves in  
 “ *peace*? Surely if there had been any mean-  
 “ ing in these frequent *threatnings* denounced  
 “ against *sinful practices*, there had been ma-  
 “ ny a *dreadful instance* of GOD’s vengeance  
 “ before this time; many persons would have  
 “ been *curs’d* in the very act of sin, and not  
 “ suffered thus to *triumph* in their wickedness,  
 “ and daily add *sin to sin*: But so far it is  
 “ from this, that such men *as these* thrive  
 “ and prosper; and if there be a *Providence*,  
 “ have as large a share in all the benefits  
 “ of it, as those who live under the greatest  
 “ sense and conviction of it.”

THIS is the substance of the *scoffer’s* objecti-  
 on against *Providence* in this particular; and  
 by such fond conceits as these it is, that the  
*sinner* is encouraged to persist in his wicked-  
 ness; because GOD has in mercy spared him,  
 and not suffered his whole displeasure to arise  
 upon him for his sins already committed, he  
 thinks himself safe and secure from all danger:  
 that there is no great harm done; or if there  
 be, that GOD *hideth away his face*, and will  
 never see it; because GOD’s eye is good,

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HIS shall be evil; because GOD out of his **SERMON**  
abundant compassion and goodness defers punishment, and waits with patience for his amendment, therefore it is that HE *strengthens himself in his wickedness, and his heart is fully set in him to do evil.* Whereas, did men but set themselves in good earnest to *consider GOD's proceeding* with them in this particular, they would be so far from making this ill use of it, that on the contrary, *these* infinite riches of his goodness and forbearance would *forthwith lead them to repentance.* And that this, and no other construction can be fairly put upon the dealings of *Providence* with sinful men, I shall endeavour to make manifest in the following particulars,

I. FIRST, By assigning some reasons of GOD's forbearance with sinners, why *sentence is not executed speedily* upon the commission of their sins.

II. SECONDLY, By shewing the ill use men generally make of this forbearance; *because sentence is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of men is set in them to do evil.*

III. THIRDLY, By answering the common objection against *Providence* upon the account of this forbearance. And,

IV. LASTLY, By setting before you the true and proper use of it, and the influence it ought to have upon us, in the *reformation of our lives and conversations.*

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I. FIRST then, I'll give you some reasons of GOD's *forbearance* with sinners.

1. *The First* and most general reason hereof is, that hereby GOD does exhibit to us the greatest instance of his *love* and *favour* towards mankind, by *sparing* when we deserve punishment, and thinking upon *mercy* when we might justly expect the *severity* of his judgments: this shews how *little desirous* he is of the *death* of sinners, but rather that they should *turn from their sins and be saved*; that he is so far from watching opportunities and taking advantage of our sins to punish us, that notwithstanding the *highest provocation* of his justice, he still waits with patience for our amendment, being willing that his clemency and mercy may outshine the rest of his attributes in his dealings with his sinful creatures.

WE must needs confess, and indeed every man's conscience tells him, that every wilful sin does naturally bespeak its own punishment, and that to have sentence executed speedily upon an evil work, would be but *common justice*: So that to defer punishment, but for the next day or hour, is an instance of *great goodness*; such as men are hardly brought to *practise* in their dealings with one another. But to forbear so long a time as GOD does, not days or hours, but years and whole ages, as in the days of *Noah*, and in the case of the *Ammonites*,

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monites, and many other instances, in holy *Writ*, and of *daily experience*, is a *patience* properly *divine*, and an act of such abundant mercy as is *peculiar* to that *GOD* alone, who *rejoiceth in shewing pity*, who is ready and willing always to pardon, and (as the *Hebrew* phrase emphatically expresses it \*) a *GOD* of pardons, who is *gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; abundant in goodness; forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin* †. And that 'tis purely upon this account *that sentence is not executed speedily* is plain, because there can be nothing else imagined that could withhold the divine vengeance from falling upon finners.

For if there was any thing, it must be either *his want of power*, or *want of will to punish sin*: But neither of these can be the causes, for as *GOD* is a Being essentially holy, and cannot look on sin with the least degree of *approbation*, but hates it at all times with a perfect hatred, so he *never wants power*, or opportunity sufficient to be avenged of evil doers, since *Omnipotence* does abundantly furnish him with *these* at pleasure. He can shew his great power, at all times when he will; and *who may withstand the power of his arm?* as the *Wiseman* speaks. For him therefore to bear with finners, and not inflict those punishments which their sins so *justly* deserve, when he is so able to punish, and has such

\* Neh. ix. 17. † Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.



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an irreconcilable hatred to ſin, muſt needs be an inſtance of the moſt *admirable patience*, of the greateſt *mercy* and *goodneſs imaginable*. But,

2. Secondly, As the goodneſs of GOD is the only motive that prevails with him, not to *execute ſentence ſpeedily upon men*, ſo his *wiſdom* has ſo ordered it, that there are ſeveral good uſes to be made of this *forbearance* as to us; which ſeem to make it altogether *neceſſary*: For

1. *First*, *Repentance* is a thing we all ſtand in need of, and yet there could be no ſuch thing if *ſentence was executed ſpeedily*; and if every wickedneſs of man was attended with an *immediate judgment*, our eternal ſtate, which depends upon what we do here, would then be *determined* by one *ſingle miſcarriage*; ſo that the ſalvation of the moſt righteous and circumſpect would at this rate be *extremely hazardous*; and what hopes then for the ungodly and notorious ſinners? The beſt of men would then die in their ſins, and *no fleſh could be ſaved*: All the gracious declarations of the *Gospel*, all the offers of pardon and forgiveness upon our *repentance*, and returning to a *better mind*, would be rendered wholly *inſignificant*: GOD indeed declares, that he is not willing that *any ſhould periſh*, but *that all ſhould come to repentance*; but how could this ever be, except there was ſpace and means offered for it? His forbearance therefore is extremely neceſſary for this purpoſe, that there may be ſufficient place left for other means that are fit to work

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work a *reformation*, such as may bring them to a true sense of their sins, and by degrees make them abhor and *forsake* them.

AND these are the *gracious methods* which GOD daily uses to reclaim sinners: He does not presently *enter into judgment with them*, and cut them off in their sins, and so convince them *in their own destruction*; of the hainousness of their offences, but *s pares* and *pities*, and *intreats* them to be reconciled: He *defers* their punishment, that he may try all likely means, and *prevent* if possible their *fi- nal doom*, by more easy methods, by the *in- ward working* of his *holy Spirit* upon their minds and consciences; by mild *admonitions*, and frequent *warnings* of his Ministers; by *gentle* reproofs, and sometimes *sharp*, but *fa- therly chastisements*; and by the *dreadful* instances of his *justice* upon those that are already be- come incorrigible. In short, he leaves no means unattempted to reclaim them that are any ways proper to determine *free agents*: So that if they slight these offers, and still continue to provoke him, they may at last *thank themselves* for rejecting the means of repentance, till his heavy judgments overtook them. But moreover

2. *Secondly*, As this method of *sudden ven- geance* would wholly exclude all *repentance*; so by this means it would deprive us of those *exemplary* instances thereof, which are so great *encouragements* to us, and such power- ful

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ful motives to go and do likewise. Thus we should want the examples of *Manasses*, *Mary Magdalen*, *St. Paul* and others, who from the greatest of sinners became great saints; and by their exemplary piety and ardent zeal for GOD's glory after their conversion, made what amends they could for their former vile conversation.

“ IF *Miltiades*, (says *Plutarch*, in his book “ *de Sacra vindictâ*) had been cut off, while he “ acted the part of a *Tyrant*, or *Cimon* in his “ incest, or *Themistocles* in his debaucheries, “ where had been all those noble atchieve- “ ments of virtue, which they afterwards “ excelled in, and by which the *Athenians* “ became so formidable and renowned.”

REPENTING sinners are generally most eminent and remarkable for a steady piety, and strictness of devotion; and that because, as our *Saviour* intimates in the case of the woman who washed his feet with tears, being also a sinner \*, *They who have much forgiven will love much.* The constant sense of their former mis-carriages, and of GOD's goodness towards them, in pardoning them, inflames their zeal, and quickens their endeavours against sin; it daily adds new life to their pious inclinations, and sharpens their devotions; it whets their desires after GOD and goodness, and makes them earnestly strive to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, by advancing their virtue to a

\* Luke vii. 47.



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pitch answerable to the degrees of those sins they have formerly committed. *Such instances as these set forth GOD's glory, and publish his good will towards men; they afford comfort and encouragement to guilty sinners here on earth; and increase, if possible, the joys of those blessed souls above in heaven: For there is joy in heaven, as our Saviour tells us, over every sinner that repenteth.*

3. *Thirdly,* ANOTHER reason why sentence is not executed speedily is, because this method would be in some sort *injurious* to the liberty of our nature, and a kind of force upon that freedom of choice which GOD has bestowed upon us. By this means *virtue and goodness* would lose their proper excellency, and 'twould always be very doubtful whether they were the results of a *rational choice*, or only the effects of a *slavish and timorous temper*, over-awed with fear and dismal apprehensions of the ensuing *punishment*. But GOD made us, and placed us in the world to serve him with a *free choice*, and therefore has thought fit to govern us by such laws as are apt to move, to persuade, and influence; not to bear down, do violence to, and enslave the *rational faculties*. And it is upon the account of this liberty alone that we can be said in any sense to merit praise or dispraise, or rewards or punishments. But if upon every *grievous miscarriage*, the sinner was forthwith to be made an example of the *severest vengeance*, the con-

*stant dread* of this, might perhaps be some curb upon him, and confound the liberty of choice, by which he before acted: It might possibly keep him from growing worse, but would never make him really better. For that goodness which men are awed into by sudden fears, call it what you will, can never have the true nature of virtue. 'Tis true, GOD has set before us his future judgments to work upon our fears, but then these lie fair for a rational choice, and don't amaze us by their nearness; they are at a distance, and not suddenly to be executed, and therefore give us leave and space to consult our own natures, and follow the free dictates of our rational faculties.

4. Fourthly, ANOTHER reason why GOD does not execute sentence speedily, may be, because, at this rate of proceeding, all society and commerce would soon cease among men, and both good and bad having the same common interests would be equally involved in the calamity. What *Florus* remarks upon the infant state of the Romans, would be true of the whole race of mankind [*Unius ætatis, populus virorum.*] One age, nay, a much less time, would serve to put a period to all human converse, and involve the whole race of mankind in ruin and destruction; every day would require a deluge to sweep transgressors away from the face of the earth. The world would antedate its destruction and be burnt

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up speedily, and the overthrow of it would be like the overthrow of *Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in the heat of his great anger and in his wrath* \*.

BUT GOD has declared that he will now no more execute such *sudden* vengeance upon sinful mortals, though the *imagination of the thoughts of their hearts, be only evil continually*; neither will he *any more smite every thing living as he has done* †. He is resolved that while the earth lasts there shall be men to inhabit it; and to this end, that all things shall proceed in a regular course, *Seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease*. He has decreed to leave men to an *ingenuous choice*, and try how far the *calmer* methods of his *mercy and forbearance* can work upon them; to let the *wheat and tares grow up together*, and not make any remarkable difference till the *harvest*; till men have *outfined* his *mercy*, and are become *ripe for judgment*; and then he will make a full demonstration of his justice, and *repay them that hate him to their face*: He will then at last fully *convince all the ungodly, of all the ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed; and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him* ‡. And this brings me to a

\* Deut. xxix. † Gen. viii. ‡ Jude verse 15.



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*Fifth* and the *Last* reason I shall mention of GOD's forbearance, and that is *for the trial of the righteous*. St. Paul tells us\*, that the reason why *Heresies* and *schismatical* opinions are suffered to reign in the Church of *CHRIST* is, for the *manifestation* of true *believers*: *There must be Heresies*, says he, *that they who are approved may be made manifest*; and indeed the same reason holds why GOD bears so long with the vicious *practices* of men. *Offences must needs come*, that those who are *truly good* and *pious* may have a sufficient *proof* of their virtues; that their *faith* and *patience* may be exercised, that their love and zeal for GOD and his laws, may have their perfect work upon their hearts; that the grounds of all their hopes and fears, their *stedfast expectations* and *reliance* upon GOD's promises, may be fully manifested to the world. But there would be no room for these *excellencies* if *vice* and *wickedness* were *crushed* at the first setting out, and the *authors* of them forthwith *cut off* from among the children of men.

BUT when sin and wickedness thrive and prosper, and make a *figure* in the world; when iniquity puts on the face of authority, and has attained to great degrees of *interest*, and *power* and esteem through the NUMBER

\* 1 Cor. xi. 19.

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of its *professors*, then is the time for *virtue* and true piety to shew itself; then 'twill easily be seen, who they are that *love* GOD, and goodness, and truth; that *bate* vice and profaneness, and are fixed in their purposes of leading *godly, righteous, and sober* lives; it will then be manifest to all the world who they are that *value truth and honesty* above titles of *honours* and *greatness*, and that prefer the *praise* of GOD above the *praise* of men, and the hopes of heaven and eternal happiness in another world, above the ease and pleasure that sin affords in this.

ALL these, and others which I name not now, are true reasons why GOD withholds vengeance from wicked men, and *sentence is not executed speedily*: which was the *first particular*.

II. SECONDLY, Another use that men commonly make of this forbearance of GOD is, that *their heart is set in them to do evil*. This is a sad truth, and is confirmed by the *wise man* in the *text*, and also by the experience of all ages; and therefore, though I have several observations to make on it, I shall rather choose to try your patience upon the *two* other heads, where I am to shew the unreasonableness of this practice, by answering the objections against *Providence* in that particular, and by setting before you the true and proper use of this *forbearance* of



GOD with sinners, viz. The influence it ought to have upon them in the reforming of their lives.

I. FIRST, I'll endeavour to obviate the plausible objection, so common in the mouths, and so influential on the practice of wicked men, and which has puzzled some very good men to account for, viz. "How 'tis consistent with the divine Providence to suffer wicked men in their sins, and not execute sentence speedily upon them, since this would both hinder their running on so boldly in their sins, and also give some encouragement to the good, and those that are injured by them; especially because to defer punishment so long seems to derogate very much from GOD's Providence, and obscure his justice; for when the punishment does not accompany the fault, but follows at a distance, it may be as well imputed to chance and misfortune, as to a providential design, and so will be like to have little or no effect upon them in order to an amendment."

I. Now to this I answer FIRST, by premising these necessary considerations:

1. First, THAT GOD is a being of infinite, man of a finite and limited nature; that his wisdom and counsels, and all his ways are like himself, infinite and unbounded; his ways not as man's ways; his thoughts very deep, and his judicial proceedings past finding out; and therefore,

2. Secondly,



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2. Secondly, THAT it must needs be a monstrous SERMON  
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piece of *arrogance* and *vanity* for any man to pretend to *fathom* the depth of his designs, or *censure* the proceedings of his *Providence*; to unriddle all his dealings with men, and shew the *strength* and *weakness* of his counsels; for this would be to unfold things that are confessedly *mysterious*, and *above his capacity* to determine. It is indeed a most *unwarrantable* piece of *curiosity* in good men and the most *daring presumption* imaginable in the *wicked* to pretend to ask GOD a reason for his judgments: for mortal men; for *sinners to ask why sinners live*: why the man that did this or that wickedness was not immediately struck dead upon the place: whereas we are *all more or less obnoxious* to the divine vengeance, and it may be justly applied to us as the *Prophet* did to David, *Thou art the man*; and if we are not *all consumed* 'tis not because we are *innocent*, but *because his compassions fail not*; because he is good and his mercy endureth for ever. Every common *artificer* pretends to a sort of *mystery* in his profession, and to do things for which others cannot readily find out a reason; he thinks 'tis sufficient for other men to see and admire, and *not ignorantly censure and pass sentence* upon his performance. And it is generally agreed that he has good reason on his side; because the better any art or contrivance is, the more it will be likely to suffer from the hands of *unskilful and incompetent judges*.

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WHETHER then is it more reasonable, that we should forthwith arraign GOD's justice, or rather with St. Paul \*, (who had a clearer prospect than any mortal can now pretend to) cry out, *ὦ βάθος!* O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of GOD! Hence it follows

3. *Thirdly*, THAT the best and most proper use we can make of this dealing of GOD with sinners would be to admire his infinite goodness and patience towards them, and to endeavour to imitate his example, to be merciful as he is merciful, to forgive others that offend us, as he also does forgive us our trespasses; not rashly to take vengeance on those that continue daily provoking us, but to be kind and compassionate towards them, if haply by that means, we may bring them to a right sense of things, even as GOD also is kind to the sinner, and to the unjust, is plenteous in goodness towards them, that if possible he may win them over to their duty, and his goodness may have so happy an effect upon them, as to lead them to repentance.

Now all these being premised, I answer,

II. SECONDLY, That we have so much of GOD's method with sinners discovered to us, that we are able to give a plain and satisfactory account of this his proceeding with them. I say therefore,

\* Rom. xi. 33.

I. First,

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I. First, THAT GOD, in his dealing with sinners, does not act upon the same principle that men generally do, of malice and revenge; [their τὸ ἀντιλυπεῖν, as *Plutarch* speaks] the design of *retaliation*, and keeping down their enemies, makes men *hasten their revenge*, and *catch* at all the likely means and opportunities to execute it. If GOD intended no more he might easily be avenged of his adversaries, and the sooner the better 'twould be. Were he a GOD that *delighted* to take vengeance, he could easily pass a *fiery* sentence upon the wicked, and *crush* the swearer, the drunkard, and the adulterer in the *very fact*, making them as miserable as they are sinful. But *his aims* are quite *different*; and therefore though a *speedy sentence against evil doers* would be a plain indication of his *hatred of sin*, yet it would not answer his *gracious intentions towards sinners*, which is, that they might *turn and live*: A *sudden vengeance* might indeed cut off some, and leave no place for repentance, and frighten others, so as to hinder their growing *much worse*, but it would scarce *cure any*, or make them *really better*. It might work upon passions at present, but it would never *alter* their inclinations and desires. *Repentance* is no sudden work, or turn of our passions, but a *thorough change of our minds and tempers*, and therefore is not to be effected by *force and violence*, but requires *time* and means proper to determine  
rational

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rational and free agents. GOD therefore thus spares sinners, that at last, if possible, *he may save them.*

2. Secondly, *THOUGH* they do *abuse* his *patience*, yet in the mean time he makes them instrumental in *promoting the other ends of his Providence*, they may be serviceable some way or other to the publick good and common interest of mankind, by their *wise counsels and directions*, by the *invention* or improvement of useful arts and sciences; they may have *children eminent* for their piety, or may be instruments of GOD's justice in punishing others who are grown *incorrigible*, and reducing others that go astray, and grow *remiss* in their duty. So that good and virtuous men have no reason to complain of this method, since 'tis for the trial of *their faith and constancy*, and that their virtues may be exercised, that *they who are approved may be made manifest.* Again,

3. Thirdly, *THE* time that GOD spares wicked men, how long soever it seems to us, is *very little* in itself, and even *nothing* in respect of *eternity*: *For a thousand years in GOD's sight, are but as yesterday*, as the *Psalmist* tells us\*; and were it much longer, still they lie open to his displeasure, and *sooner or later* must *unavoidably feel the smart of it.*

4. MOREOVER, Fourthly, GOD bears with sinners *a great while*, that his *Providence* may

\* Psal. xc. 4.

be

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be the more remarkable in their punishment afterwards, of which we have many instances both in sacred and profane Story, particularly in the case of *Pharaoh King of Egypt* \*: And in very deed for this cause, says GOD to him, *have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.*

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5. *Fifthly*, **THOUGH** sinners have escaped a long time, yet when vengeance overtakes them, they must needs be sensible that it comes from GOD, and not by chance and misfortune: because their consciences have given them frequent notices of it: They have constantly filled them with dread and horror, and a fearful expectation of something worse to fall upon them, and perhaps that is not the *smallest part* of their punishment: for what can well be greater, than for a man to be robbed of the ease and quiet of his own mind; to have no peace within himself, but like the troubled sea, to be never at rest, but toils and roll about in perpetual disorders and confusion; to be racked with a thousand anxious thoughts, and dismal apprehensions of what must follow. In this case their wickedness is in truth their own punishment, so that the longer their life is, the longer is the time of their punishment. "They are so far," says *Plutarch*, from escaping punishment till "they grow old, that they grow old in pu-

\* *Exod. ix. 16.*

"nishments,"

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"nishments," inasmuch that what we call by that name, is only a finishing stroke to an infinite number of perplexities and miseries, that, like some *distempers*; shew themselves only at last, when all is grown *incurable*.

6. *Sixthly* and lastly; THE chief reason of all, why GOD spares wicked men here is, because the next life is the only *proper* time for their *punishment*. He therefore reserves them for a *future judgment*, that by an *open and solemn trial*, at last his honour and justice may be vindicated and made manifest to all the world. His *judgments* indeed are sometimes so remarkable in *this* world, that we cannot but see the hand of *Providence* in them; and if they are not always so, it is only because *there are* sufficient at *present* to make us stand in awe and firmly believe his *future judgments*. "GOD, says *Cbrysoſt. punishes some* in this "life, that his *Providence* may not be censured; he does not *punish all*, lest we should "lay aside the thoughts of a future judgment, and take this for a sufficient recompence." This life is only a state of *trial*, in order to the next, wherein at last a *full retribution* will be made according to every man's work; *the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction, they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath\**.

AND thus, I hope, I have fully answered the *objection*; and shewn how *unreasonable* it is, and how absurd the *practice* that is sup-

\* Job xxi. 30.

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ported by it ; *that because sentence against,* SERMON  
&c. VIII.

I COME now in the last place, to set before you the *true and proper use* of GOD's forbearance with sinners, *viz. The influence it ought to have upon them, in the reformation of their lives* : And in order to this, I'll here, in short, enforce the following considerations :

1. *First, CONSIDER the great goodness of GOD in his dealing with sinners, how he spares when we deserve punishment, and thinks upon mercy when our sins deserve the severest of his judgments* ; he gives us time and leisure to repent ; spares no means, neglects no opportunities to make us set about it ; he waits with patience for our amendment, and like the *indulgent father in the Gospel*, thinks it long ere we return from our erroneous courses, and be reconciled ; and is ready with open arms of pity and compassion to embrace us, he is not more *displeased* at the commission of our sins than he is grieved that we don't forsake them. And herein is the unsearchableness of his love manifested to us, that he still suffers his *mercy to triumph*, as it were over his *justice*, to relieve us from the jaws of death and hell, and obtains a longer space for our *amendment*.

Now what mind can be so much alienated from GOD and goodness, as not to be deeply affected with such *immense kindness* ? What heart can be so obdurate, as not to *relent* and melt with the *charms* of so great bounty and good-

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goodness: This I am sure was an argument to piety that prevailed with the *Royal Psalmist* above any other consideration whatsoever: There is *mercy with thee, O LORD, and therefore shalt thou be feared* †. And St. Paul tells us that this is the only design and proper use to be made of GOD's forbearance: *Despise thou, O man, says he, the riches of GOD's goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of GOD leadeth thee to repentance* \*. And certainly if such love towards us will not make us grow wiser and better, it is impossible any thing should.

2. Secondly, CONSIDER the danger we run, by not reforming our lives upon GOD's forbearance with us; this is to kindle GOD's wrath against us, and provoke him to plague us; 'tis to thrust ourselves out of his protection, and reject his kindness towards us, by which means, we shall soon fill up the measure of our iniquity, and force him to hasten his vengeance, and vindicate his truth and justice, by inflicting some speedy and remarkable judgment upon us: Sinners cannot but think that they are under the displeasure of GOD, even at the same time that he defers their punishment; for them therefore to grow worse by his forbearance, must needs be the highest provocation, the most aggravated guilt imaginable. There can nothing remain for such

† Pal. cxx. 4. \* Rom. ii. 4.

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despisers

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despisers of GOD's grace, for such wilful obstinate offenders, but *a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation to devour them.*

3. THIRDLY and lastly, consider the *severity* of the punishment like to fall upon us, if we continue in our sins, notwithstanding GOD's forbearance with us: It will not be *a light affliction*, or even a cutting off by some *remarkable vengeance* in *this world* (though we have dreadful instances of this kind, sufficient one would think to deter men from all such provoking practices) but an *everlasting destruction* in the world *to come*. And truly how can we escape this, *if we neglect so great salvation?* Such *gracious offers* and means of repentance? Nay, we really increase our own damnation, proportionably to the guilt of refusing such *gracious offers*. And by despising the *riches of GOD's goodness*, and *forbearance*, we *treasure up to ourselves wrath against the day of wrath*, and *revelation of the righteous judgment of GOD* \*.

THE severest expressions of GOD's anger are denounced against obstinate offenders, such as *do despite to the Spirit of Grace*, and harden themselves in their wickedness, notwithstanding all the helps and opportunities of repentance. His hottest *vengeance* will devour those, whom his greatest *mercy* could not save. He will *glorify himself* in the *destruction* of those, who would never be persuaded to glo-

\* Rom. ii. 4, 5.



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*ify him* in their lives and actions, he will make large amends for the *delay* of their *punishment*, by pouring out the *vials* of his *wrath* upon them; and *this consideration* will be one of the most *aggravating* circumstances of their misery, and will alone be a *Hell* of insupportable horror and despair to them; that they have *despised* so much *goodness*, *neglected* so many *merciful entreaties*, *slighted* such *fair opportunities* of being *happy*.

AND now what remains, but that we apply what has been said unto ourselves; that we *make haste* and *prolong not the time* to keep GOD's commandments. That we henceforth resolve no longer to *abuse* his *patience* towards us, but rather use it, for preventing his judgments from falling upon us either here or hereafter, by *bringing forth fruits meet for repentance*. This would be our *wisdom* and our *interest*, and in doing this we should promote the true ends of GOD's forbearance with us, *viz. his glory*, and *our own advantage*. Thus we might *increase* his mercies towards us, and secure ourselves *eternally* in his favour; then should we clearly understand the loving kindness of the LORD, and his *praise* would *ever be in our mouths*, for *his mercy* and for *his truth's sake*: We should be so far then from *charging* GOD *foolishly*, as *slack in punishing sinners*, that we should rather thankfully adore his goodness in *waiting* so long for our *amendment*, and account the *long-suffering*

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fering of GOD to be what St. Peter tells us SERMON  
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it is, *Salvation*. Oh let us then in this our day consider the things that belong to our peace, before they are hidden from our eyes. Let us seek the LORD while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near, that he may be nigh to us in all dangers, and succour us with his grace, and Holy Spirit; that he may be found of us a GOD of mercy as always, so especially in the hour of death, and at the day of judgment: For which mercy, the good GOD fit us all, for the sake of the SON of his love, our blessed Saviour and Redeemer,—To whom with the FATHER, and the HOLY GHOST, be all praise and dominion now and for ever, Amen.

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of GOD to be what St. Paul said  
 On in the year 1811  
 and consider the things that belong to our  
 and the fact of the Father's promise  
 GOD with us to be found, and call  
 and the Father's promise, that in the day  
 and the Father's promise, and become as with his  
 and the Father's promise, that the day be found  
 of us a GOD of mercy as always to come  
 only in the best of times, and on the day  
 of which mercy, the good GOD  
 in us all, for the sake of the son of his love,  
 not blessed Father and Father, — To whom  
 with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be  
 all praise and dominion now and for ever  
 Amen



## S E R M O N IX.

The extreme Folly and Impiety  
of mocking at Religion.

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St. JUDE's general Epistle, verse 17 and 18.

*But, beloved, remember ye the words  
which were spoken before of the A-  
postles of our Lord Jesus Christ:*

*How that they told you there should  
be mockers in the last time, who  
should walk after their own ungodly  
lusts.*

**T**H E humour of scoffing at religion, and S E R M O N  
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the professors of it, and of turning all  
serious matters into jest and ridicule,  
how monstrous soever in a country where  
Christianity is solemnly profess'd and established,  
is yet a very reigning one among us, and  
grown so general, as to prevail among persons  
of almost all orders, degrees and ages. Indeed

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to deride GOD and his Providence is, among many, become their usual entertainment in conversation; and no jest is received with more applause, than what is made upon the holy Scriptures and the Preachers of them, as if profaneness and blasphemy were proofs of good sense, and wit then sparkled most, when it is most profligate and daring.

THIS is a humour which both Christ and his Apostles foretold would come in the last days; and though by the last days are principally meant, those times that did immediately go before that fatal vengeance that GOD took upon the Jews, in the destruction of Jerusalem, yet they may very well be understood likewise to mean these latter ages of the world, when the prophecy is as punctually fulfilled, as ever it was before; inasmuch as there never was a greater indifference shewn to religion in general, nor a more open and barefaced liberty taken in denying the principles, and in ridiculing the mysteries, in scoffing at the ministers, and mocking at the promises and threatenings thereof, than there is at this time taken in the world. It will not therefore be unreasonable, to examine into the nature of this vice, and to propose some remedies against so growing an evil: which is what I shall endeavour to do, by considering some of the chief kinds and instances of this sin of scoffing at religion; and by shewing the extravagance, folly and wickedness of them.

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I. FIRST then, *They* are some of those *scoffers*, who are foretold should come in the *last days*, who take upon them even to deny and laugh at the existence of a **GOD** and *religion* under every notion whatsoever; who confound the *eternal difference* that there is between *good* and *evil*; and who expose all the *principles* of *morality* and *virtue*, as the effects of *weakness* and *melancholy*; who, as *St. Peter* says here, *walk after their own lusts*, and say, *where is the promise of his coming?* And so giving themselves a full *indulgence* in debauchery, and acting all manner of sin *with greediness*, endeavour to account for their extravagant way of living, by denying *religion* itself, and laughing at the notion of a *future judgment*, as a vain fancy, or an idle dream, as the effect of men's *fear* and *cowardice* only; or as the invention of some *crafty politician*, contrived to keep men in awe, and to secure their *submission* and *obedience*.

THIS is indeed the highest and most *extravagant* sort of *scoffing*, that any one can arrive at; and the *extreme* folly of it will appear by these two or three considerations.

I. *First*, I WILL suppose these men to be *in earnest* in these matters, and that they really are persuaded that the notion of a **GOD** is nothing else but the creature of men's brains, the pure effect of *fear* and *fancy*; (for though I believe it to be absolutely impossible for men to think so in



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good earnest, yet for argument's sake, we will suppose it to be fact) and yet even in this case they would be *inexcusable* for their *scoffing*; if it was only upon this account that they do thereby make a mockery of that, which the *generality* of mankind have agreed ought to be revered and adored. Because whether what the *generality* have agreed upon be right or no, yet there is this respect and privilege due to human reason, that what it does in a manner *universally* approve and allow of, ought not to be *reviled*, and treated with contempt. Common *decency* and *good manners* requires us to be *silent* at least, when we cannot speak our own minds without accusing and arraigning the *reason* and *judgment* of the whole world besides, and especially if the thing agreed in, be look'd upon as a matter of the greatest *moment* and *concern*; and from which men cannot be withdrawn, but with much *uneasiness* and *regret*.

It is also a known *rule* of conversation and behaviour, never to revile or speak ill of an *absent* person, before those who are his friends, or relations; or whom we know do stand indebted to *him* in many and great obligations: Because this is an affront to those that are present; and *they* are struck at through the sides of their *absent* friend. Now what friend, what benefactor is there to whom the *generality* of men dare pretend so much regard as to the GOD who

made

made them, and preserves them? How is it then, that these *scoffers*, who are usually pretenders to *honour* and *good breeding* at least, how is it, I say, that they should thus contradict their stated *principle* of *civility* and *good manners*? They would not, they'll tell you, do or say a *rude* thing for the world; and yet when they *scoff* at the belief and expectations of those they converse withal, they do *really* treat them with the utmost *contempt* and incivility. For what indeed can be a more *flagrant* offence against decency and good manners, than thus to make a *mock* of *him* for whom the rest of the company bear the most awful reverence, and of whose honour they hold themselves obliged by all the sacred ties of *gratitude* to be *watchful* and *jealous*? By this you may see the *folly* of this licentious practice, even in those who disown the belief of a *GOD*, it being directly contrary to their own approved *rules* and *maxims* of conversation: And, tho' otherwise I put no great stress upon this argument, yet to *them*, it ought to be looked upon as a good reason why they should restrain this *liberty*; because however it fares with *other* vices, such is the *peculiar* folly of *this*, that a man must forfeit his *good manners*, whenever he is guilty of it, and cannot be a *scoffer* but he must be a CLOWN.

2. Secondly, THIS *humour* of *scoffing* at religion is a great argument of *folly*, even in those

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those who don't pretend to any *principles* of conscience, because they do thereby take the readiest way to lose the esteem and reputation of the world. *Wit*, and a liveliness of thought and fancy, are certainly excellent *gifts* of nature, and very noble, and useful qualifications; but then they are of all others the most capable of serving to *bad purposes*: For as when they are in the possession of a *wise* man, they may be made a proper diversion of *melancholy*, may *sweeten* conversation, and render it highly agreeable; so they will become offensive and even *loathsome* when they swell beyond their due bounds, when they *fly* at every thing and every body, and spend themselves in *invectives* and *railing*: For this is all the pure effect of *malice* and *ill-nature*; is directed to no other end, but to *vex* and *discompose*, and then let the *strains* of *wit* be never so *strong* and *lively*, they can be acceptable to none but those who have their *secret spleen*, *ill-will*, and *envy* indulged thereby.

So THAT if there be any thing which the *generality* of men have fixt a *value* upon, and are so concerned for the reputation of it, that they will think themselves *affronted* in its being *disparaged*, he that will, in such a case, take upon him to ridicule and expose what stands so high in *general esteem*, certainly bids *fair* himself for publick and universal *dislike* and *reproach*. Now *religion* is *still*, and ever

was



was the profession and belief of the generality, and few can bear with patience the *imputation* of being *hypocrites* therein: When *religion* is therefore treated as an *empty name*, without foundation or meaning, what is this, but to call all the world at once so many *misguided fools*? But let a man manage this *charge* with the most delicate *strokes* of wit, yet they will have no other effect but the raising the *indignation* of all *serious* persons against such *unworthy* treatment.

INDEED, I cannot see how men of this *audacious* cast can expect to be looked upon as any other than the very *pests* of *society*. For if a man disclaims all pretences to any *religious awe* of GOD and *Providence*, what *just* hopes can any one have of *security* in his company? For he who is restrained by no *checks* of *conscience* from designedly *insulting* and *scoffing* at the very Being of GOD himself, can be under no *impressions* of any kind strong enough to preserve him from doing *violence*, if he be but secure of *concealment*.

SUCH a man therefore, if he was really believed to be as *rash* and impious as he desires to be thought he is, ought for the same reason to be shunned as you would a *savage beast* of prey. So that the *practice* of these *pretended wits*, is a plain contradiction to their *own principles*, "of making themselves as happy and easy, as they can in this life, as the only life they expect to enjoy." For  
"certain-

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certainly, they must absolutely defeat *this* design; whilst they thus deprive themselves of the *good-will*, love and confidence of those they converse with. For *this* is to undermine the very *foundation* of all that peace and *security*, without which there can be no *true* happiness.

I HAVE hitherto proved the folly of *scoffing*, from considerations respecting this life only. But since no man can *fully*, and *without scruple* believe that there is *no* GOD; and since the most that the perversest reasoner can do is only to raise some *doubts* concerning this grand point: I proceed,

3. *Thirdly*, To *shew* the folly of *scoffing* at GOD and *religion*, because as the danger that is incurred thereby is *infinite*, so there is no possible advantage that can be reaped by it. I now suppose what the *boldest* atheist cannot deny, namely, That there are at least as good reasons for *our* belief, as for *his* infidelity; and upon this supposition, there cannot be a more *unthinking* creature than *he*. For in all doubtful cases common sense directs us to take that side on which there is the least *certain* danger, and the greatest *possible* advantage. This is the *rule* by which we judge of the management, conduct, and prudence of men in the ordinary affairs of this world. Let us then enquire how the matter stands in the point before us.

Now 'tis certain no *peculiar* disadvantage can accrue to the *religious* man because of his *belief*

lief of a GOD: For if, after all, his hopes should prove vain, and there should be no *future state*, nothing will befall him, which the *scoffer* will not share in common with him: But if his expectations are not groundless, and it should appear at last that there is a GOD, and a *future state*, then he has treasured up to himself an inestimable *reward*; even an *exceeding and eternal weight of glory*: Here we see he runs no desperate *hazards*; he can lose nothing by the venture, but may be an *infinite gainer*.

AND now what reasonable motive has the profane *scoffer* for what *he* does, that can counterbalance this. One would imagine that men of their *boasted reach* of understanding must have some mighty advantage in view to answer to that *conflict* which they daily undergo in subduing the reluctance of their minds, when they thus dare GOD and a future reckoning. One would imagine, I say, that they expected some glorious *reward* for such *hard service*; when after all the chief of their hopes, the *sum* and top of all their expectations is to *die* and become nothing, to retire back into that state of darkness and *insensibility*, out of which they came at first into *life* and being. So that the very *best* that an *atheist* can hope for, is the worst that can befall a *believer*. Whereas if the *scoffer* should at last be mistaken, and should, by terrible experience, find, that *death* is only a passage



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passage into another state of *life*, and sensation, then his loss will be inexpressible, even *that* of his immortal soul, which must suffer the *vengeance of eternal fire*.—*When the LORD shall come with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodlily committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. For to these raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame, is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever* \*.

4. *Fourthly*, THE arguments for the proof of GOD's existence and of a state of rewards and punishments hereafter, are not only sufficient to *alarm* the most avowed atheist, to abate his confidence, and make him *stagger* in his infidelity, but they do really *convince* him whenever he does calmly and seriously attend to them; and this is what the *girds* of his conscience, and the *terror* and confusion he is frequently under, from his sense of *guilt*, and apprehensions of *punishment*, do fully testify. For these *fears* are all founded upon a *real belief*, in some degree or other, of the very principles he would seem to deny. For why should any one be scar'd at what he indeed believes to be but a *phantom*? And what ground for *any fear* at all where *no danger* is apprehended?

\* Jude 13, 15. verses.

BUT

BUT here these ingenious men are wont to reply, that the apprehensions we speak of, are so far from being a proof of the existence of a GOD, that the very notion itself of any superior Being's existence, is the mere effect of these apprehensions, and that GOD would never have been the object of men's thoughts at all, if their fears had not first painted him in their minds. This profound discovery they owe, 'tis likely, to these words of the Poet:

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Primus in orbe Deos fecit timor.—

Fear first produced the notion of a GOD.

For I believe this piece of a verse has been many a time in certain companies quoted with great success; and when it has been delivered with a proper air, and with due sufficiency, has passed for a weighty truth, and has administered much present courage to some whose fears began to be troublesome.

BUT notwithstanding this, the admired sentence is utterly absurd, and as void of truth as of modesty. Indeed it begins at the wrong end; it is founded upon a mistake of the effect for the cause, and is to be made sense of, only by reading it backwards. If it be reversed, then indeed the truth of it appears presently. For if the notion and belief of GOD's existence, be already formed and

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and settled in the mind, 'tis impossible to be any longer void of *fear*. An awe and dread of so much *majesty*, and so great *power*, must of course arise: For what can be the object of *this passion* if *He* is not, *who can destroy both body and soul in hell* * ?

BUT on the other hand, when *fear* is supposed to be the *cause* of the belief of GOD's existence, here is plainly a great effect ascribed to a very incompetent cause ; that is, the notion or the *belief* of a GOD is supposed to be produced by the passion of *fear*. But what is the *notion* of a GOD? Is it not of a *Being* possessed of all perfections? and particularly of *goodness*, mercy and benevolence, as well as of *strength* and power? If then it could be supposed that *fear* might form the notion of a *Being* indued with power to *hurt* and *destroy* us, yet this will avail nothing in the present argument, unless it can *create* the notion of a *Being* endued with *goodness*, and kindness, and love, and mercy, *as well as of power*. For these, and other *attributes* besides, are as necessary in the common notion of a GOD, as that of *Almighty Power* is. But none of these are pretended to be suggested to men's minds by their *fears*. 'Tis true a *Being* supposed to be endued with these excellencies, may, and ought to be loved, desired, and adored; but how he can be the object of *fear* upon the account of any, or all of them to-

* *Matt. x. 28.*

gether,

gether, will never be attempted to be shewn. Since then *fear* can go no farther than to feign a GOD of boundless *power*, and since the notion of boundless *power* is far from completing either a rational, or the *usual* notion of GOD, it follows necessarily that this *Atheistical* sentence under consideration, is as unreasonable and *groundless* as it is *audacious*.

BUT farther, this *fancy* concerning the *creative* power of *fear*, is not only *groundless*, but plainly contrary to the *nature* of things. For 'tis agreed on all hands, that *fear* can have *no existence*, and consequently no power, no influence, no properties, till 'tis excited and brought into act by somewhat extrinsick to itself. This, as well as all other *passions*, must continue *dormant*, till somewhat exists, or is supposed to exist, with a power to *raise* them. The heart of man is the common *subject* of all *passions*; but the *objects*, or things upon which the *passions* are employed, are alone capable of *raising* them: till these therefore act, the *passions* are quiet, nor can any effect be produced by them at all.

So that to affirm, as *Atheistical* men do, "That the *notion* of GOD has no other existence, but what the *fears* and apprehensions of men have given it," is just as contradictory to *common sense*, as to say, "that it is possible for a man to *hate* or to *love* what has never entered his mind, to be *angry with*, or to *desire* what he has

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“ never once thought of, or to exert any other *passion* concerning a matter or thing that has never been the *object* of his understanding, or even his imagination.” So absurd is this sentence of the *Poet*, and so very *weak*, or so very *shameless* are they who quote it as a true one.

THE CONCLUSION of what has been now offered is this. Since the *fear* and dread of an *invisible Being* with power to *save* and to *destroy* does, and ever did, at one time or other, attend, even the most *profligate*, among this *audacious tribe* of men; and since, as has been now proved, this cannot be the effect of *fear*, or any other *passion*, but of belief and conviction only; then the *folly* and stupidity of these pretended *wits* must be most flagrant, who in such a situation of things can dare to make a jest of religion, to laugh at GOD, and his *Almighty Power*: For this is to *defy* danger, and to *outbrave* destruction. For if he who breaks GOD's laws, does thereby subject himself to his anger, and is liable to *eternal* punishment, how much more dreadful must be their *fate*, who, to the breaking of GOD's Laws, add the impiety of making a *mock* at their doing so? Who not only live as if they were *without GOD in the world*, but make it their business to persuade men that they really believe so; and even *stretch forth their mouths to the heavens* *, and point their reflections against

* Psal. lxxiii. 9.

the *Almighty*. Who openly *blaspheme* him, despise his threats, and entertain his Laws and Ordinances with contempt and ridicule.

THIS is the last and most dangerous degree of wickedness and folly; for, as the *Apostle* speaks, *will they provoke the LORD to jealousy? Are they stronger than he?* But let them not deceive themselves, *GOD* will not be mocked, but will one day rise terribly to judgment, and shew himself to be a consuming fire: When their fear shall come upon them as desolation, and their destruction as a whirl-wind, and distress and anguish shall come upon them: Then because they have set at nought his counsel, and despised all his reproofs, he will also laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh*.

AND thus, I have shewn the folly of this provoking humour of *scoffing* at religion; and it appears to be so extravagant, that if the *Scriptures* did not tell us that there would be *scoffers*, and if our own observation did not assure us that there are such, one would not think it possible. For there is really no pretence that can be suggested to colour over the folly of this practice: For, if it be said, as perhaps it may be said, that the *scoffer* does it out of a good-natured design, of laughing men out of such principles as are troublesome to them, and which deprive them of those

* Prov. i. 25, 26, 27.

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~ satisfactions they might otherwise indulge themselves in. To this it is justly answered,—That besides the fruitlessness of endeavouring to free men from *prejudices*, (as they are called) which are so deeply rooted in their minds, this suggestion is founded upon *very false* presumptions.

FOR *religion* is not that frightful thing, that it is here supposed to be, neither do the precepts of it enjoin any thing so disagreeable to our natures as is imagined; for, *her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace* *. But indeed if the *scoffer* could be certain, that every body else was under a mistake, yet his *zeal* to dispossess men of their *supposed* delusion, would be even then *cruel* and unjust, for as much as their opinions do (without the possibility of *hurting* any one) bring the most *solid contentment* and *comfort* to those who entertain them, being indeed the only means to support their spirits, and render life easy and agreeable. So that whatever prospect of gain or pleasure men may have from other *sins*, in this of *impiety*, they plainly *sin* for the very *sake* of it; and so, if in the attacks they make upon sacred things, they should sometimes throw out some *flashes* of *wit*, it is always done so much at the expence of common sense and understanding, that they will have but little reason to boast of the *reputation* they will get by it.

* Prov. iii. 17.

BESIDES

Bsides these *scoffers*, whose folly and wickedness I have been now considering, there are others, who though they do not reach the impiety of those before mentioned, yet are to be reckoned among the number of those *scoffers*, which the *text* tells us should come in the *last days*; and they are,

II. SECONDLY, Those men who employ their wit in a profane use of the *word* of GOD; who by *forced* and *wrong* applications of *texts* of *Scripture*, make them the subject of their *merriment* and diversion.

BUT how wicked and how very provoking is this practice? And can we think that GOD will suffer his holy word to be thus *vilified* and ridiculed, and perverted to purposes so base and so contrary to the design of it, that instead of being treated as an *instrument* of *salvation*, it should be made a *handle* for *jest*s, and a means to provoke *mirth* and raillery. And yet how common are the instances of this kind, and even among those too, who at other times will shew some sense of *religion*, and who do make open profession thereof, by joining in our *common devotions* in our publick assemblies: Among these, I say, nothing is more usual than a bold indulgence of themselves in the *petulant liberty* of making merry with the sacred volumes. They'll wrest and bend the most innocent words and expressions, till they make them speak such a sense as their

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licentious wit and fancy is pleased to fix upon them.

BUT sure no folly can be more extravagant than an *abuse* of *Scripture*, so shameless as this is; because as it is an indignity offered to the alwise Author of it, so the *temptation* to it is the most trifling that can be; for I know of no other, but the *wanton pleasure* of saying such things with an air of *wit* and humour, which a *wise man* would forbear, and a *good man* would abhor. And what man of common discretion would thus barter his soul for so *empty* a satisfaction, for such a mere *phantom* of pleasure as this is? Does the reputation of being a *wit*, deserve to be purchased at so dear a rate? But after all, is there any *true wit* in this kind of conversation? Is this that glisters so much in the eyes of some people any thing more than *shew* and *tinsel*? It is indeed no more. And if men were to treat *profane authors* in the same licentious manner, they would be thought impertinent, and their conversation would be shunned as disagreeable, so that it is the boldness and rashness of the practice only that gives it the *air* of *wit* and *smartness*.

BUT after all, make the best of this humour, and let it be managed in the most *dextrous* manner, 'tis no more than a wanton kind of drollery, confessedly the lowest and easiest *species* of *wit*, and what very gross understandings are capable of shewing, if they have

have rashness and profaneness enough to try at it. It is strange therefore that persons of any seriousness, and who have not quite bid adieu to *religion*, can prevail upon themselves to offend in this kind, in any case whatsoever, since the temptation to it is so small, and the profaneness so great and so provoking; and especially too, because such an unworthy abuse of the faculties GOD has given has a direct and natural tendency towards *corruptions*, still more dangerous and pestilent; because every thing grows cheap and contemptible by an over free, and too familiar use of it: And he that will allow himself to descant upon those *sacred volumes*, in a strain of *mirth* and *buffoonry*, which should never be read or talked of but with seriousness and *reverence*, is but one remove from disbelieving and renouncing them all.

For when he has for a while pleased himself with playing upon what he before thought *sacred*, 'tis natural for him at last to think there was some reason for what he has been doing, and then 'tis no wonder if he turns his *wit* into *serious reflections*, and proceeds from one degree of *profaneness* to another, till he becomes a confirmed *infidel*: For 'tis but just in GOD to leave such men to their own vain imaginations, who have thus done *despite* to him and to the *Holy Spirit*, by a *contemptuous use* of his most *holy word*. Let therefore no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good, for

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*the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the bearers, and grieve not the Holy Spirit of GOD *.*

III. THIRDLY, and LASTLY, There are still some *other scoffers of these last days*, who make it their business and diversion to expose and ridicule GOD's *Ministers*, and the dispensers of his word and *sacraments*. Indeed that men should be insolent to GOD's *Ministers*, who make so bold with GOD himself is no wonder, and they do but act consistently with themselves when they do so: But that any one, who owns the truth of the *Christian profession*, and acknowledges himself a member of *Christ's Church*, and hopes for salvation in *that Church*, should allow himself in this *petulant* humour of scoffing at those who are the *Ministers* of it, to whom is committed that *word of reconciliation*, by which alone they can be saved; that THESE should be the subject of a *Christian's taunts* and mockery, purely upon the account of their *function*, is so inconsistent, as makes it very suspicious that such men care not for GOD himself, nor are solicitous for the honour of his *worship*. I am sensible of the *delicacy* of this point, and of the difficulty of managing it to any good effect by one of *our Order*, the very mention of it being apt to raise jealousies, and give occasion to our enemies to charge

* Eph. iv. 29, 30.

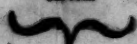
us with designs of *dominion* over the consciences of men, and of *magnifying* our office, only to serve our own interests and *ambitious* views. But notwithstanding this inconvenience, if the practice complained of be of dangerous consequence to religion, men must be told of it, *whether they will bear, or whether they will forbear*; and for this reason, I shall presume to say *something* to this point, though for the other reason mentioned, I shall not say a great deal.

Now I think I may, without *indecenty*, affirm, that the *reflections* usually cast upon the *Clergy*, as such, are an indignity and affront to *Christ*, whose *immediate* servants and *ambassadors* they are: For he has himself told us the same in the words of the *commission* to the seventy *Disciples* *, *He that beareth you, beareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me*: and that this is not to be restrained only to those who were sent by *Christ* himself, is plain from what *St. Paul* says †, *We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the LORD, and admonish you: and to esteem them very highly in love for their work sake*. And that they might be induced to do this, he represents the *dignity* of his *function* in the most lofty terms imaginable,

* Luke x: 16. † 1 Theff. v. 12.

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not, I presume, out of *priest-craft*, or *self-interest*, or respect to his own person, or partiality to his profession; but because he knew both that *it deserved* regard and *deference*, and also that *it stood* in need of it. And surely it *deserves* regard as it is an *institution* of *Christ's*; the slighting of which, must in the end redound to *his* dishonour; and it *stands in need* of it, because the ends of its *institution* being to propagate and support the interest of the *Gospel*; this cannot be in any tolerable degree done, if the *Office* itself be held in dishonour, and those who exercise it are treated with contempt. For let a person be qualify'd never so well to *teach*, *exhort*, and *reprove*, men will not bear with those things from him, unless they think he has power and *authority* for what he does. 'Tis next to impossible that any thing but *soft* and *smooth* things should be attended to, or entertained by those, who are beforehand disposed to hold *them* in contempt from whom the instructions come.

AND let these *scoffers* distinguish upon the matter as they please, and pretend that they have no ill-will to the *Order*, and that their only design is to expose the *vices* of those who are *unworthy* of the character they bear; this allegation, as it is for the most part false, so it is generally nothing else but a *specious pretence*: For the very *nature* of the *reflections*, as well as the way and manner of their be-

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ing made, shew that they are levelled against the whole *body* of the *Clergy*, and thereby against the *Order* itself. And indeed since this *Order*, when supported in its *full* dignity and power, is the main bulwark of true and pure *religion*, it is no wonder that it becomes the object of these men's envy, and that they never cease to load it with all the infamy they can, as the *most* effectual means to open a way to all kinds of *vice* and *profaneness*, by thus hindering the *word of GOD* from having its *free course* and being glorified.

AND therefore whatever may be pretended as a reason in these days for running down the *Christian Ministry*, men must be abandoned to all *principles* of *religion*, that can join in such an absurd and causeless *outcry*: For however some among this kind of *scoffers*, may disown all evil designs against *religion*, yet the *intemperate heat* and *zeal* they shew against the *divine* institution of the *Ministry*, and the boundless liberty they take in *reviling* those that are dedicated to any of the *sacred* offices, plainly shews that their main design is to bring those men into disrepute, whose labours *GOD*, in his wisdom, has thought fit to make use of, as the means of preserving truth, and *Christianity* in the world: For they know very well, that when men are contemptible, and divested of all authority, they will have but little influence upon others, even though they could *speak with the tongues of men and of Angels*.

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THE design therefore of these *maligners* of the *Priesthood* seems levelled, not at this or that particular *Church* only, but against all Churches; and their designs would not be answered, by any thing less than the subversion of *Christianity* itself. But their hopes will be disappointed, and they must one day be forced with *Julian* (though I hope not with his despair) to own themselves overcome by *him*, whom that *dying apostate* contemptuously called the *Galilean*. For whatever wicked men may think, or desire, our blessed SAVIOUR has assured us, that his *Church* is so founded upon a rock, that the gates of hell itself shall never prevail against it. Amen.

S E R M O N X.

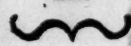
The Duty and Excellency of
an affable and courteous Be-
haviour.

I P E T E R iii. 8. latter end.

Be Courteous.

THE whole verse of the *text* as well as the following verses, are a collection of precepts directing to the several ways whereby we are to shew our *charity* or *love* to our *brethren*. *Be ye all of one mind, have compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise, blessing, and so on.* The *Apostle* here, I say, is enumerating some of the chief of those duties, that flow from a *principle* of *love* or *charity*. So great a stress does the *Spirit* of *GOD* in *Scripture* lay upon that great duty of *brotherly love*, as not only to enjoin it in general

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ral terms, and press frequently and earnestly the *general* practice of it, but it descends likewise to all those *particular instances* of respect and kindness that can in any measure be said to proceed from it. It mentions the particular duties that are the natural result of it, and recommends them to us as very material parts of our *Christian* obedience. And herein it is that the *Christian religion* does remarkably distinguish itself from all other dispensations whatsoever.

"TIS TRUE indeed the *Heathen moralists* did enjoin love and charity, but then they allowed of so many particular exceptions to the general duty, that it made all their precepts about it fall infinitely short of those which we have in the *Gospel*: For they had no notion of being obliged to *love their enemies*, and were so ignorant of the true nature, and full extent of *charity*, that they thought it honourable and glorious to *revenge* themselves upon those that had injured them. And as to that particular branch of *charity* which the text enjoins, that is *courtesy*, or a civil carriage and behaviour to all men; they were, some of them, so far from making this a part of their *religion*, that there was one eminent sect among their *philosophers* [the *Cynicks*] who professed a *morose* and churlish behaviour just contrary thereunto. Neither were the *Jewish* notions of *charity* and brotherly love much more enlarged or commendable:

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Their law, the [*lex talionis*] indulged them in too scrupulous a regard for themselves, which made them far from being *courteous* or *affable* in their behaviour towards others: They thought it not inconsistent with their *law*, to be impatient under affronts and indignities; to *hate* their enemies, and to revenge themselves of their adversaries. And because they knew themselves to be GOD's *chosen* and peculiar people; because they were forbidden intercourse with the men of other nations; this greatly bloated their minds, and filled them with a *fond conceit* of themselves, and a *contempt* of others; which shewed itself in a very *churlish inhospitable* behaviour towards all men of other countries.

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BUT now both the rules and examples given us by our *Saviour* and prest by his *Apostles*, are quite of another nature, and *complexion*; they speak nothing but love and tenderness, *courtesy* and meekness. So that it was with the greatest reason that our *Saviour*, when he gave his *Disciples* the commandment of *loving one another*, calls it a NEW COMMANDMENT, because in the degrees and extent of it, it was different from any precept of love or charity that was enjoined or practised in *any other religion* whatsoever. And upon this account it is, that the *Apostles* in their several writings, do insist so much and so often on this duty: And this they do, not in *general* terms only, but descend to *particulars*; and to prevent all mistakes



mistakes or evasions about it, they point out the *several branches* of it, and recommend them all *severally* to our practice. In the verse of the *text* the *Apostle* mentions no less than four several acts of duty, necessarily flowing from that general fundamental law of charity; *be of one mind*, says he, that is don't thwart, and peevishly oppose one another: *Have compassion one of another*; *be pitiful*, and lastly, *be courteous*.

It will not therefore be *improper* to make this *virtue* the subject of a discourse to you, to explain the *nature* and *importance* of this branch of *Christian charity*; and that I may do it the more fully and usefully, I shall observe this method.

I. FIRST, I will enquire into the particular meaning and import of the command, *be courteous*.

II. SECONDLY, I will lay before you the several parts and offices of this virtue. And

III. THIRDLY and LASTLY, I will draw some useful inferences from the whole.

I. FIRST, I am to enquire into the particular meaning of the command in the *text*, *be courteous*. The original word is *φιλόφρων*, which most of the *Latin* copies have translated *comes*; the precise meaning of which

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our English translators seem to have hit, in rendering it *courteous*; as that signifies the being civil and obliging in our outward carriage and behaviour towards others. For though the original word is not used elsewhere in the New Testament, nor any word of the same composition, save where *Publius* is said to have received Paul φιλαφρόνως, *courteously* *, yet as the sense of the word in the text well accords with the manner in which *Rublius* did receive *Paul* and his company, which was with great *courtesy* and *humanity*, the word used by *St. Luke*, may serve to settle and ascertain the sense of the word used in the text. And this the rather, because although the original word is used only in this place, yet others, of the same precise meaning with what the translators have given for the sense of it, are often mentioned, when any acts of *Christian charity* are particularly recommended.

Thus *St. Paul* †, when he is recounting the works of the *Spirit*, does, under the word χησότης, make mention of the virtue we are considering—χησότης importing that very gentleness of manners, or that sweetness and affability of conversation, in which courtesy is allowed to consist. For although χησότης may sometimes signify peaceableness, [εἰρήνη,] and long-suffering, [μακροθυμία,] yet it is plain that it can mean neither of these in this place, be-

* Acts xxviii. 7.

† Gal. v. 22.

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cause it is to be observed, it is mentioned separately from them both; *gentleness* or *courtesy* being here put down as a *fruit* of the *spirit*, distinct from that of *peace* or *long-suffering*. And *Grotius* very aptly explains the meaning of that passage of *St. Paul*, where he exhorts the *Ephesians* *, to be kind one to another, in these words *ῥίμεσθε δὲ εἰς ἀλλήλους χρηστοί*, by observing that the kindness meant is of the same sort that was shewn by *Abraham* to *Lot* at parting, when he talked with him upon occasion of a difference that had risen among their servants, with the utmost *candour* and *courtesy*. Let there be no strife, I pray thee, says he, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen, for we be brethren; is not the whole land before thee? separate thy self, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left †. This is a lively description of that *χρηστότης*, that *gentleness*, or *courtesy* the *Apostle* had enjoined in the place I now mentioned. So that the *virtue* recommended in the text may be rightly defined in this manner. It is that tender and gentle disposition of the mind, whereby a man is disposed to order his discourse and outward behaviour so as to be not only innocent and inoffensive, but agreeable and acceptable to all those he con-

* Eph. iv. 32. † Gen. xiii. 8, 9.

an affable and courteous Behaviour. 227

verses or hath dealings withal. And this was the first thing I was to do, namely to fix the true meaning and import of the command in my text; *be courteous*. I come now to consider,

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II. SECONDLY, The excellence of this *virtue*: and in what instances 'tis to be shewn. And

I. FIRST, THE first office of this *virtue* of *courtesy*, is to observe a *decency* in all our words and actions, so as to behave towards others, in all the *relations* in which we stand to one another, with a due regard to those *rights*, that a *difference* of station and circumstances do respectively give *different* persons a just claim to.

THIS *virtue* is so necessary for the living with any comfort in *society*, that it ever was in esteem, even with *heathens* and *idolaters*; and whatever absurdities they ran into in point of *religious* ceremonies, and rites of *worship*, they always looked upon *courtesy* and *affability* as necessary to sweeten life and conversation; and in proportion to their knowledge and skill in *learning* and *arts*, were noted for *humanity* and complaisance, so as from thence to be distinguished, from *less* cultivated people, by the style of *civiliz'd nations*. And agreeably hereunto all persons of good extraction and a *polite education*, in all countries, whether they profess to be guided by the dictates of *religion* or no, are particularly de-

firous of being esteemed *masters* of this virtue, as an accomplishment quite necessary in persons of *their* condition, and indeed as a qualification in some sort *peculiar* to *such*, from whence alone, no doubt, the title of *gentlemen* is claimed by them, and allowed to them.

BUT although this is a proof of the value and excellency of this virtue (for which reason I mention it) yet we shall be led into error, if we think that it is a *duty peculiar* to *men* of *birth* and a liberal education. Although the *want* of it is more disgraceful, and more faulty a great deal in *such*, than in *others*; yet it is alike the *duty* of *all*; and is doubtless in frequent instances practised in a greater degree by *those* from whom 'tis less expected, than by *such* who, from their station and extraction, are much more *blameable* for neglecting it. For indeed it is a *duty* that results from every *relation* that can be supposed to subsist between one person and another in life.

THUS for example:

1. *First*, A MAGISTRATE in the execution of the power, with which his *Prince* has honoured him, should be greatly careful not to be elated therewith, not to put on stern and supercilious airs, nor to treat his *inferiours*, no not even those who *stand* in *judgment* before him, with disdain and contempt. On the other hand, he should consider the

great *uncertainty* of things in this life, and the *sudden changes* that happen to persons of all conditions, and especially, that whatever his *dignity* may be, he is *in nature* but *equal* to the man who then perhaps stands *trembling* before him; and this should dispose him to all gentleness and humanity, should prevent all rough and haughty expressions, all bitter and sarcastical ones; in a word his whole behaviour should be *gentle* and benevolent, and he should make it plain, that whilst he is *impartial* in the execution of *justice*, and *solicitous* that the guilty do not escape the *vengeance* that is due, he has yet a hearty *good-will* to all men, and seriously *pities* the *unhappy* and *distressed*.

So in the case of superior dignity and power, whether arising from titles of *honour*, or places of *trust*, or great affluence of *wealth*, the fortunate possessors should never behave in such a manner, as to give their *inferiors* cause to think themselves treated with neglect and *haughtiness*; but should consider, that a *gentleness* of manners, and a condescending and obliging behaviour, as it well becomes *them*, so it is what *others* have a just claim to, in recompence for that *awe* and reverence, and submission which they ought to pay to their *superiors*. For,

2. Secondly, It is on the other hand the duty of an *inferior* to shew his *courtesy* towards his *bettors*: Now this he is to do by making a difference between a *man* and the

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office he bears, and respecting him for the dignity and high station he sustains in life, either from his birth, his wealth, or his posts of honour, even when it may happen that he has but little ground to claim *regard* and *esteem* upon any other account. And whatever some men may pretend against the necessity of such a *distinction*, it is certainly what *Christianity* obliges us to, and that for very good reasons; because without this behaviour, the differences of order, title, place, and precedence would be confounded, by which the *publick* safety, as well as the quiet and peace of *private* persons would be much endangered.

FOR no government can be maintained but upon the foot of a *regular subordination*, and *that* cannot be preserved without a difference of honour and obeisance, of distance and respect suitable to the several degrees of power and authority, that persons are invested with. So that to refuse to pay the regard that is due to a man's *station* or *dignity* is both unjust and *dangerous*, inasmuch as it naturally tends to the destruction of all good order and discipline whatsoever. This then is a *reason* founded in *nature*, why we are obliged to *this* instance of a *courteous* and affable behaviour. But,

3. *Thirdly*, THE same kind of *courteous* and affable behaviour, is to be observed *reciprocally* between all *relatives* whatsoever. The manner

manner of shewing it will vary, but the *duty* itself is the *same* in all, and its *importance* towards procuring the peace of society and the happiness of mankind is in a manner *equal*. Thus the comfort of the *married* state can never be effectually secured without a due portion of this *excellent quality*. And I believe much the generality of those who are unhappy in it, may justly charge at least the *beginning* of their misfortune, upon some notorious breach of this *duty*. And accordingly the *Scripture* at the same time that it requires *wives* to SUBMIT to *their husbands*, and to REVERENCE them, commands *husbands* to give HONOUR unto *their wives*, and not be BITTER against them *; which are all the genuine offspring of this *Christian* grace, and but so many acts and instances thereof.

THUS again in the relation between *parents* and *children*, *masters* and *servants*, the grand secret of doing their respective duties, with regard to one another, in such a manner as to procure mutual love, peace, and good-will lyeth here; namely, That they observe the laws and rules of *courtesy* and affability; that they behave towards each other with good-will, and a plain desire of doing *mutually* what is acceptable to each other, and avoiding every thing that is apt to *irritate* and displease. And accordingly the *holy Scripture*, in setting forth the

* Eph. v. 25. Col. iii. 19. 1 Pet. iii. 7.

The Nature and Excellency of

particulars of these *relative* duties, does principally insist upon several acts and instances of this virtue of *affability*. So children are bid to HONOUR as well as to *obey their parents*: And parents are required not to *provoke their children to wrath*. Servants are commanded to be obedient to their masters, with fear and trembling, and in singleness of heart, not with eye-service, but with good will, not answering again, and all with a view of *pleasing them well in all things*. On the other hand masters are enjoined to shew the same sincerity and good-will towards their servants, so as to do every thing by them that is just and equal, and particularly to *forbear threatenings* *. So that we see the duty of the text extends itself far and wide, and is required in every state and condition of life, in which a man can be placed; and a careful discharge of it is plainly the necessary means of procuring the quiet of the world, the peace of families, and the happiness of mankind. But it is time to proceed to some other particulars. Wherefore,

2. SECONDLY, ANOTHER instance of this virtue is seen in duly observing the *decencies* of conversation. For this reason, a courteous man is never contentious about trifles, but modestly submits to the opinion of others, rather than be troublesome, by *pertinaciously* defend-

* Eph. vi. 5, — 9. Col. iv. 1. Tit. ii. 9.

ing what is of no consequence to himself or any one else, whether it be true or not. He is cautious of advancing any odd and *singular* notions; and is never *positive* in matters concerning which there is any dispute, unless truth will suffer by his submission: Is willing to let others he converses with have their *share* of the discourse, and does not talk as if *liberty* of speech was his property only; is *not hasty* and passionate and given to interrupt, but can hear others with patience, and be easy and unmoved under contradiction, and thinks it is time enough to make a *reply* when 'tis called for, and expected.

THESE are the effects of this virtue, and are all very commendable and useful, and will be the great ornament of those who shew them. I do not however *cease* *others*, who thro' any defect of nature, or want of education, cannot in all points reach to this perfection, (if their behaviour be otherways *religious* and *exemplary*) because great allowances are doubtless to be made to all persons in such circumstances. But this is no argument against the excellency of *this instance* of *courtesy*, because through weakness and infirmity every body is not able to attain to it. If it can be proved to be a *commendable* quality every *wise* man would be zealous to be master of it; but if it can moreover be proved a *Christian virtue*, every good man should be possessed of it. And that it is so appears plain, because

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because it is a *nurse* of peace and friendship, and does mightily contribute to the pleasure, as well as usefulness of society. For if the *decencies* of conversation before mentioned are not observed, but we are loud and positive, fond of our own conceits, impatient of contradiction, and would have our *private dictates* received as *oracles*, and meet with no controul, as this is no other than a plain insult upon those we converse with, so we must provoke them thereby to contention, which soon improves into feud and animosity, and sometimes ends in *implacable enmity* and hatred.

3. THIRDLY, THE *courteous* man readily complies with the innocent *forms* and *customs* of the time and country wherein he lives. The *customs* of any place are in effect the inferior laws of it; and a long and immemorial observance of them, if innocent, makes them in some degree *obligatory*. So that to neglect and despise them, is always an argument of *conceitedness*, and affected *singularity*; and is a common occasion of much disturbance and disorder. For he that differs from other men in these respects, openly accuses every body else of *folly*, and want of judgment, which is a piece of *ill-manners*, as well as of *pride* and arrogance, that will not be born without resentment and indignation, and will ever administer occasion of dislike and debate. And for this reason the *wisest* and *best* men of all ages have thought themselves obliged

bliged to be so *complaisant*, in all cases of an *indifferent* nature, to the *humour* of the times, as to follow the long prescribed *usages* of the place, though perhaps at the same time, in their private judgments, they have not greatly approved of them. The saying is good which I have somewhere met withal: "Let us take care to lead *better* lives than the common people do, but not such as are in every respect *contrary* to theirs, otherwise we shall *defeat* our purpose of *correcting* their *errors*, by driving them from us and making them uneasy in our company *."

FOR a *morose singularity* does naturally offend every body, and especially those whose notions of what is useful and expedient are usually taken from the *modes* and *customs* of the country where they live; St. Paul was very sensible of this, and therefore, as far as innocently he could do it, he made himself *all things to all men, that he might gain some* †. And this was the practice of the primitive *Christians*, as appears by the testimony of several of the ancient *Apologists*, and particularly by an *epistle* to *Diognetus* ascribed to *Justin Martyr*, and if not his, written by one antienter than he ‡, in which we have these words very apposite to our pre-

* Id agamus ut meliorem vitam sequamur quam vulgus, non ut contrariam, alioqui quos emendari volumus fugamus, & a nobis avertimus.

† 1 Cor. ix. 32. ‡ Vide Fabric. Gr. Biblioth. tom. v. p. 58.

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sent purpose, "Christians differ from other men neither in dwelling, language, nor customs; they neither inhabit towns peculiar to themselves, nor use any particular dialect of their own, nor live in any singular out of the way manner; but as Providence orders, dwelling in cities both of the Greeks and Barbarians, conform to the customs and usages of the country*." Nor do we find that our blessed Saviour denied to comply with the innocent customs and manners of his time; he conversed also with all sorts of people, of all characters, professions, and dispositions, in a free, easy and open manner; he went whither he was invited, and partook with cheerfulness of such innocent repasts as were offered him.

4. FOURTHLY, THE courteous man addresses himself, as he has opportunity, to persons in distress, in order to cheer their spirits. Is any one disconsolate through affliction, or drooping under a painful distemper, as he pities his case, so he proffers his help, and though he may not be able to remove the evil, he will try to allay it in the best manner he can. And now what can better become a Christian than so loving a temper as this? what suits more exactly with the divine grace of

* Χριστιανοὶ γὰρ ὅτε γῆ ὅτε φωνῇ ὅτε ἔθεσι διακεκριμένοι τῶν λοιπῶν εἰσὶν ἀνθρώπων. κ. τ. λ.

Justin, Mart. in epist. ad Diognetum.

charity,

charity, one chief property of which is, that it is kind? Men in distress are wont to magnify their misery, and it is common with them, through the anguish of their souls, to refuse to be comforted, and sink into despair; so that the most *dextrous* address is needful in such piteous cases; and whoso uses it, to the recovery of the afflicted man's patience, is at once the author of a double instance of *charity*; he gives ease to the distressed, and brings him back to his duty, which is to convert a sinner from the error of his way; the goodness of which act is attested to sufficiently by St. James, when he affirms, that such a one shall thereby hide a multitude of sins *.

5. FIFTHLY, ANOTHER instance of this virtue is seen in dextrously *reproving* the faults of others: And there is no virtue of more eminent use than this; for men, especially of spirit and generosity, are usually *impatient* of *reproof*, and are ready to fly in the face of the reprover, despise his counsels, and be hardened in their follies: for there is so much *pride* in most men's constitutions, that they know not how to bear the being accused of *folly*, though they are guilty of it never so flagrantly: In case they are convicted, they will continue to plead *not guilty* to the indictment, and will persist *incorrigible*, rather than seem to have needed counsel or instruction.

* James v. 20.

Now such men must be applied to with great dexterity, if you would expect to work any good upon them. It is allowed therefore, that this office of a *reprover* does not belong to *many*, being indeed so difficult as not to be executed *successfully* but by *very few*. For he that undertakes it must both stand in some relation to the person reprov'd, which gives him *authority*, and a *power* to command attention, and must be also held in esteem for his judgment and discretion. But even all this is nothing, without complaisance and address, without gentleness and affability. These are the only instruments, whereby good counsel can be made to lay hold of one who is far gone in vice, and *led captive by sin and Satan*.

I F any man, says the *Apostle*, *be overtaken in a fault*, ye which are *spiritual* restore such a one, — But how is this to be done? Why only — *in the spirit of MEEKNESS*: No haughtiness or vanity must appear; no passion or peevishness, but the whole must be dispatched with respect, reserve, and privacy; and in a word, in such a manner as may bear full testimony to the *good-will*, tenderness and affection of those who undertake so *delicate* an office: and to that purpose, as all satyr and sarcasm must be avoided, every thing *reproachful* and *contemptuous*, so all faults must be charged upon the *inadvertency*, *surprise*, and *imprudence* of the offender; upon any thing indeed, rather than a *perverse* abandoned de-

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fire of doing wickedly, unless such a desire be very open and *flagrant*. And without a conduct like this, *reproofs* will only *exasperate* the spirits of those who are meant to be bettered by them, and hurry them on to more *scandalous* and desperate practices.

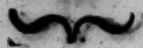
If therefore the *conversion* of sinners and the *reformation* of the world be what every man's best care should be employ'd about, and if GOD has himself appointed *reproof* and correction as the means of reformation*; and if no kind of reproof can answer the end of it that is not conducted with great *gentleness* and *affability*, then 'tis plain, we are not recommending the *accomplishment* of a person of *condition* only, but a *Gospel duty*, and what is necessary in every *Christian* in his place and station, and in proportion to the power and opportunity that he may have of shewing it.

6. THE SIXTH and LAST instance of this virtue is shewn in freely *commending* the good actions, and honourable exploits of others. Every man who does well, has a just *title* to the *praise* of men for so doing; and he that refuses it him, denies him a true debt, and deals unjustly by his neighbour. Every thing indeed that is excellent does dispose men of course to *approve* and like it, and in the very nature of the thing forces them secretly to *admire* it; and yet there is such a *perverse-*

* Lev. xix. 17. Heb. iii. 13.

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ness of temper in many men, that will hardly suffer them to think well of those things that are done by persons whom they dislike, and to whose *merit* and *reputation* they have a *malignant* eye. This makes them turn *pick-thanks*, and study to find fault, and give ill turns, false glosses, and uncharitable constructions upon designs that are good and *praise-worthy*, that they may sully the credit of those whose actions they are previously resolved not to approve of. Now a *courteous* disposition abhors this *unworthy* practice, and instructs men to do justice in their *words*, as well as in *their actions*; and accordingly disposes them to pay all men, enemies as well as friends, that *tribute of praise* and commendation which their virtues and honourable actions deserve. And the *reasonableness* of this conduct is evident, for besides that we ought to be *impartial* and equitable in all things, and especially when we give our *judgment* of persons and their actions; when we withhold praise from *those* actions that deserve it, we are injurious to the *publick*, we contribute hereby what we can, to discountenance generous actions, and do a manifest prejudice to the interest of virtue and religion.

For though virtue be in its own nature truly amiable, and its future reward a sufficient reason to make men pursue and practise it, yet the force and efficacy of it would soon decay, if that *praise* and honour which is due to it from men were once generally denied it: For
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although the praise of men is but a *mean* reason why a man should undertake great and generous actions, 'tis, I fear too, often the *true* one. I proceed,

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III. THIRDLY and LASTLY, to make futiable application of what has been said, and

1. *First*, WITH regard to a *sect* of men who under a *pretext* of religion deny this property of *Charity*, and act in opposition thereto. I mean those men, who, whilst they call themselves *Christians*, deny the necessity, and deride the use of both *Sacraments*. Thus are they by principle severe and fullen in their aspect, *precise* in their dress, *formal* and singular in their language, as if they were resolved to be *schismatical* in every thing, and as if the rule of their behaviour was to be fetched neither from *Scripture* nor from *Reason*, but from an opposition to the received *opinions* and *customs* of all the world besides. Thus to comply with the innocent forms and fashions of their country, they look upon to be as blameworthy as a breach of the natural law; and will rather break the peace with their neighbours, than move their *bats* to a *magistrate*, or use the common *compellations* of honour and respect; they will sturdily deny the *lawfulness* of *oaths*, at the same time that they will make an *affirmation* in such words, than which, no *oath* was ever more solemn and binding:

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They will *carp* at the usual fashion of drefs and apparell at the fame time that they are even *more* scrupuloufly exact in others, no lefs troublefome, and no lefs expenfive. Now one could hardly imagine that men fhould be fo *abfurdly fuperftitious*, as to place religion in the obfervance of fuch *indifferent* things as thefe are; but it is done, and they find their account in it.

THESE formal obfervances enfnare the *vulgar*, who are thereby cheated into an opinion of their great humility; but how falfe the pretence is that fuch men make to *humility* upon this fcore, muft be very plain from the foregoing difcourfe. For from thence it appears that fuch a ftudied contempt of the innocent customs and fashions of their *contemporaries*, is fo far from being either *instance* or argument of *true religion*, that it is indeed a *violation* of it. In truth their *perverfe* oppofition to the common fenfe and practice of men in matters utterly *indifferent*, is not a proof of *lowlinefs*, but of *pride*.

FOR nothing elfe could difpofe them to fuch a barefaced oppofition to the fenfe of the whole world. And this charge is brought with the more reason, becaufe they publickly *avow* another *principle*, which leads them not only into acts of *rudenefs* and *infolence*, but of *injuftice* and even *rapaciousnefs* too: When under pretence of religion, they take upon them to deprive men of their *properties*, and to

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apply to their *own* use, as far as they can do it, what neither *they*, nor their *fathers* ever *purchased*, or by any other way acquired a *right* to; and which have been, for many ages past, confirmed to the *Church* and *Clergy*, by the *laws* of the *same society*, under which these men themselves claim the whole right they have to their *own* estates and possessions. And certainly till they forbear *this practice*, and openly disclaim the *principle* upon which it stands, all persons who wish well to the *establishment* in *Church* and *State* should be careful how they confide in the pretended *meekness* and *simplicity* of such men.

2. *Secondly*, AN application may be made of this *discourse* to another and the most considerable *sect* among us, who separate from our communion, under a pretence of a dislike to the *rites* and *ceremonies* used in our *worship*. We have seen that the virtue of *courtesy* disposes men to a compliance with the *innocent* humour, fashion, and customs of their times, suffers them not to affect any thing *singular*, in matters of an *indifferent* nature, but teaches them to deny their *own* fancies, in order to indulge and gratify others in *theirs*, being harmless. And if it be so in common cases, how much more in the case of *publick ceremonies*, and the manner of performing *religious worship*, if what is commanded does not contradict either *reason* or *Scripture*, because the consequence of not complying is, in this case, very *deplorable*.

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Thereby the Church of Christ is rent into sects and parties, peace and friendship violated, faction and animosity prevail, a strong flame of contention is kindled and daily fomented; so that whatever pretences may be made of a purer and more edifying way of worship, so long as men know nothing sinful in our ceremonies, even the common rules of courtesy, and good behaviour alone ought to oblige them to a constant unreserved communion with our Church.

I would not be thought to put the stress of our cause against the Dissenters upon this single point: I know there are some among them who pretend that the terms of communion with us are sinful; they are to be answered, and often have been, very effectually, another way; but for those among them who know better, and dare not call our worship sinful, (which is now a great and the leading part of them) and yet forsake it upon a pretended dislike of the outward manner of it; the precept of the text plainly condemns them; and is a full answer to all the little shifts and trifling reasons they could ever frame to excuse themselves by.

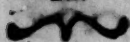
AND though this may be thought a very inconsiderable argument in comparison of those many others that have been used, in order to confute and convince that gainsaying people, yet I am sure, this alone is more than they will be able to answer. For however they

may pretend a liberty of acting just as they please in matters purely indifferent, even in direct opposition to all the world besides, I am sure our *blessed Saviour* himself gave us a very *different* example, and they must *except* against *his* practice, before ever they can be able to *justify* their *own*. And now give me leave in the

3. *Third and last* place, To apply what has been said to such of our own communion, whose groundless nicety with regard to indifferent matters, has sometimes brought a reproach upon *Christianity*, as a morose and severe *institution*, forbidding the exercise of *courtesy* and good manners. Indeed it is much to be lamented, that men of principle and conscience should be of this preposterous humour, so as thus to place *religion* in matters that have no relation thereto; and insist upon them with the same zeal and *eagerness*, as if the main principles of *morality* were at stake, and urge them as of the same necessity with the weightier matters of the law, *justice*, *mercy*, and *faith*: As if a solemn face, and a precise stiff behaviour was of the highest obligation; and as if because religion requires us to be grave and sober, even cheerfulness and a lively conversation were inconsistent with it: As if because we are bound to lead *spiritual* lives we ought to be above receiving any *impressions* from *sense*; and because we are members of a *spiritual* Kingdom, we are therefore to be *disfranchised*

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from all temporal ones, and be above the common and necessary forms of conversation and society.

WE ARE indeed very wisely warned by the *Apostle*, not to *abuse the world*; but that very caution itself supposes that we may *use* it; and if we do, it must be in such a manner, as the nature of the thing requires, that is, by conforming ourselves to such customs and usages, as the innocent humour and custom of the times, and country wherein we live, have made necessary.

THIS is the case among other things, in the matter of *dress* and *apparel*. So that to charge *pride* and *vanity* upon this or that *fashion*, is generally an effect of weakness or moroseness: For nothing can be of a more indifferent nature in itself, provided it be not too expensive of time, too costly, and does not lead and invite persons to impurity. I would not be thought to recommend any thing vain, or any ways to undervalue the strictest rules of virtue and caution; I would only endeavour to shew that *religion* is not to be placed in caprice and humour.

I SAY then, the circumstances of time, place, age, birth, and education are to be considered, and allowances made accordingly, before we can *peremptorily* condemn what we are *singular* in disliking, and cannot shew to be inconsistent either with the rules of *reason* or *revelation*. For that would be to make our *fancy* the *rule* of all persons

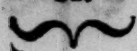


sons behaviour, which I am sure is a truer instance of *pride* and *vanity*, than any thing that we can charge on those with whom we seem so much displeased. As the *gravity* and *solemnity* of religion require seriousness in all our behaviour, so does the *charity* it enjoins demand a modest compliance with other people's *innocent opinions*, in all such cases where custom has obtained as a law, to which the generality think themselves bound in common decency to conform.

PARTICULARLY; a sour, morose and severe behaviour has no place in *true religion*, nor is it in any wise required by it. When therefore men affect austerity and preciseness in their daily conversation as the genuine effects of religion, they do prejudice and hurt to the excellent cause they would seem to serve. For they who already sit loose to religion, will not think the better of it, by observing it thus to be placed in *formality* and *affectation*; what lyes so open to objection will be ever in the eye of those who watch for pretences to justify their own conduct, and bring discredit upon religion.

TO CONCLUDE therefore; a wise and good *Christian* will be careful never to offend by a *sour, rough, and churlish* behaviour; will do nothing out of frowardness and opposition, but will look upon all such irregularities as the mere effects of a malignant temper, and as reproachful to the *meekness* of the Gospel.

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On the contrary he will attend to the excellent precept of the *text*, And will make it his endeavour to recommend religion to the approbation and practice of others, by a *manly* and *unaffected* behaviour in the discharge of all the parts of it; by doing *good things* in a *good*, that is in a kind, an obliging and an *affable manner*, mixing the graces of *courtesy* and gentleness with an observation of the *restraints* of religion, and the *strictnesses* of an exemplary life.

Now to GOD the FATHER, GOD the SON, and GOD the HOLY GHOST, be ascribed all honour, &c. *Amen.*

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SERMON XI.

Universal Obedience indispensably required by the *Gospel*.

JAMES ii. 10.

Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

IF THIS *passage* of *Scripture* was duly weighed, by all those who pretend to receive it, with the rest of the *holy Bible*, as the word of GOD, they would not content themselves with such a *defective obedience*, as many of them are known to do. 'Tis easy to observe, that persons professing to be *Christians*, do frequently allow themselves *liberties* very contrary to that *strictness* of life and behaviour, which the plain and undoubted meaning of the *Apostle* in the *text* requires from them. An *universal*, steady, and uniform *obedience* to all the *Laws* of the *Gospel* without reserve

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serve, and without exception, is most evidently required here; inasmuch as he that shall keep the *whole law* in all points but *one only*, shall, for that *single transgression*, be deemed *guilty of all*. For whatever may be the meaning of the *Apostle* as to the kind or degree of guilt hereby contracted, this is certain, that no excuse is here allowed for the transgression of any *law*, but the *precepts of GOD* are all alike made the rule of our Obedience. This is evident at first sight, and yet it must be owned that this *passage* has given occasion of *debate* concerning its precise meaning, and has been looked upon by some both among the *Ancients* and *Moderns*, as difficult and *obscure*, even so far as to require some limitations and distinctions, to make it thoroughly consist with several known and plain Truths. It may not be improper therefore to discourse to you upon these words, as well to clear and ascertain the *true sense* of them, as also to prove the *truth* of the *doctrine* contained in them, concerning the necessity of *universal obedience*, and to enforce the same upon you as a point of very great importance, and which must be attended to and believed by all *Christians*, at the peril of their souls.

To this end I shall endeavour

I. FIRST, To clear and state the true and exact meaning of the words of the *text*.

II. SECONDLY,

II. SECONDLY, To lay before you the *doctrine* contained in them, and shew the reasonableness and equity thereof.

III. THIRDLY, To consider some of the pretences Men are wont to make in excuse for their falling short of that *perfection*, which the *doctrine* of the *text* supposes to be necessary in all *Christians*.

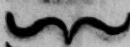
IV. FOURTHLY and LASTLY, To make some *inferences* from the whole, for our farther instruction and improvement.

I. FIRST, I am to clear and state the true and exact meaning of the words of the *text*. But before I do this, and in order thereunto, I must desire your attention to the following particulars.

1. *First*, That the *Apostle* cannot mean to affirm, that he who is a transgressor in *one point*, is for that reason a transgressor in *all points*: That he that violates *one Law*, does thereby violate *every Law*: So as by being guilty, for instance, of a *single act* of fraud, or uncleanness, to involve himself in the *guilt* of oppression and perjury, of murder and blasphemy, and *every other transgression*. No; whatever the words may seem to import, this cannot be their meaning; because, besides the obvious inconvenience and absurdity of such a
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supposition, it is evidently contradictory to itself. For then a man might be guilty of *one* extreme at the same time, and in the same instance, that he offends by *another*; may be chargeable with *covetousness* by being *profuse*, with gluttony and drunkenness, for being to the hurt of his health, *too rigidly* abstemious.

2. *Secondly*, That whatever may be the precise meaning of the *Apostle* in this place, it cannot be his design to destroy all *difference* between one sin and another, and to teach that the *guilt* of all sins is the *same*, and their heinousness and malignity equal. That the guilt of *murder*, and of *adultery*, of *sacrilege*, and of *perjury*, is the same with that of every other transgression; and that he who is guilty of *them all together*, is no more a criminal than he who has offended but in *one instance*. He cannot mean to say, that an *atheistical* and abandoned *profligate* is not a greater offender, than he who in the main is a careful observer of GOD's law, though he does in some case or other allow himself in the practice of what *he knows* to be a *sin*. Or that a *vain talker* is as great a criminal before GOD as a *perjured man* or a blasphemer. This cannot be the *doctrine* of the *Apostle*, because it is greatly absurd, and to the last degree unreasonable.

3. *Thirdly*, That the *Apostle's* meaning here cannot be, that all *offenders* shall be treated in the *same* manner hereafter, though their sins are



are never so *different* as to the *kinds*, or the *number*, or the *aggravations* of them. He cannot mean that the most *flagitious* and unnatural acts will be punished with no more *severity*, than those which are of a *less malignant* and less hurtful kind: Nor that he who is guilty of every vice that can be thought of, will not meet with sharper lashes of GOD's vengeance, than he who yields only to *one* temptation, to that *sin only that easily besets him*: Because such a *doctrine* as this is both absurd in itself and is moreover directly contrary to the plain words of our blessed *Saviour*, who has declared, that men shall be beaten with *more* or with *fewer stripes*, according as the *degrees* of their knowledge* shall more or less aggravate the guilt of their not *doing the will* of our *heavenly Father*; and who has also in the strongest manner asserted a difference between sins, in having threatned some of them, and especially *hypocrisy with a GREATER damnation*†.

4. BUT there is a *Fourth* way of understanding these words of the *text*, by which all the forementioned absurdities will be avoided, and yet the *Apostle* be allowed to say, that *he who offends in one point shall by that single offence so far destroy the virtue* of his obedience in other instances, as to become guilty

* Luke xii. 47. † Luke xx. 47.



Universal Obedience indispensably

before GOD, even with regard to those laws which he never *particularly* violated.

It is said to have been the opinion of the *Pharisees*, "that a man will be esteemed *just* before GOD, who observes the greater part of the law, though he should transgress it in many particular instances." This, as hath been thought *, was the opinion also of some among the *first Christians*, and then the design of the *Apostle* might have been to guard men against so dangerous a fancy.

BUT whether this was the *avowed* sentiment of any among them or no, 'tis not improbable but the conduct of *some* among them, as well as of so *many* in these days, might be suitable to this persuasion, and that they might act as if they thought an observation of GOD's law for the most part, and in the main would suffice, and that *Christian* perfection would very well consist with many great and grievous transgressions. Now in this case it was no wonder either that the *Apostle* should warn them, to whom he wrote, against such a pernicious notion, or that he should express himself in the manner he has done.

FOR as such a *notion* is destructive of all *religion*, and defeats, as far as any principle can, the very end and purpose of our *Saviour's* coming into the world; it became an *Apostle* both

* *Estius.*

to warn men against receiving it, and also to do so, in some such manner as might thoroughly engage their attention, and *alarm* their fears. Accordingly he affirms in direct and positive terms—*That whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point he is guilty of all.* By which he plainly affirms, that there is no *balancing of accounts* in religion, as some men have dreamed; and that *justification* is not to be had upon a *partial* obedience. But that the observation of the *whole* law of GOD without exception to any particular branches of it, is *bound* upon the *souls* of *all* men. For as much as even *one*, and that the most *minute* transgression, will subject a man to the *guilt of all*, or will make him an offender with regard to the whole law, even in those particulars wherein he has never *actually* transgressed.

THIS has been looked upon as a kind of *paradox* by some, and indeed the accounts that have been given by Commentators of the meaning of it, are not all of them *clear* and *satisfactory*. Some say, the *law* being to be considered as a *pandect*, or general collection of precepts, enacted by GOD for an *absolute* rule of men's actions, he, *who offends in one point is guilty of all*; because every transgression, how small soever, is a violation of the *general* law of righteousness, which is no longer preserved *intire*, and so involves the transgressor in the *guilt* of offending against the *whole* law.

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AGREEABLY hereunto others illustrate the matter by resembling the *whole* law to a garment, which ceases to be intire by being rent in *any one part*; and to *harmony* in *musick*, the perfection of which is *wholly* destroyed by *one* as well as *more* discordant sounds. And all this is rightly said, but does not enough illustrate the case, because it assigns no reason for the truth of the *fact*, does not shew how it happens, that a *single* transgression can thus induce *guilt* upon a man as well with regard to those laws which he has never transgressed, as to those he has.

FOR a *full* solution of this matter then, it must be farther considered, that he who offends only in *one point*, offends however against the *Enactor* of the *whole* body of laws, and contemns his *authority* as truly, as he who violates every branch of the law.

NOW the foundation of acceptable obedience to GOD is founded in the *love* of his goodness, and in the *fear* of his power. So that where *both* these *principles* are wanting, the obedience that is pretendedly pay'd to any of GOD's laws, though the actions required by the laws may be performed, yet they are in no true sense real acts of obedience, because it is neither *love* nor *fear* of the *Legislator*, or any reverence to his *authority*, or awe of his *power*, that has produced them, which yet give all the *virtue* that there can be in any acts of obedience whatsoever.

WHERE-

WHEREFORE whatever transgressions of GOD's laws men are guilty of, how small soever they may be deemed, being however inconsistent with a *true* love of GOD, and a *dread* of his power, and are indeed so many acts of rebellion against his *authority* and *right* of government, men may, by *one* instance of transgression as well as by *more*, be justly charged as guilty of the *whole law*, because their pretended obedience in other respects is strictly no obedience at all, it not being founded either in the *love* or *fear* of GOD, one of which at least is required in all true obedience.

Now there is no difficulty at all in conceiving the matter when taken in this view. The confusion has arisen from a supposition of the *Apostle's* meaning to assert that a *single* transgression of *one* law is an *actual* transgression of all the rest, which is neither said, nor meant. What is said is, that he who offends in *one* instance is *guilty* of *all*; that is, as he is an *actual* offender, against *one* branch of duty, so he is not *truly* and *acceptably* obedient in any other. His obedience is not genuine, and he is therefore justly charged with a *general* guilt, even with regard to those laws which he has never *actually* violated, because he does not perform them in *that view*, and upon those reasons, which are required.

AND THIS interpretation of the *Apostle's* meaning in the *text*, receives great strength and confirmation from what follows



presently after it, which he gives as a reason and proof of the truth of what he had asserted. *He, says St. James, that said, do not commit adultery, said also do not kill; if therefore thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the Law* *. The *Apostle's* argument whereby he supports what he had said of a man's being *guilty of the whole law* by *one* offence, is grounded entirely upon this, that all laws, as well that against *adultery*, as that against *murder*, have one and the *same author*: And therefore, that a man is a transgressor of the *whole law*, by being so in any *one point*, because he herein renounces all *love* and *fear* of GOD, the only principles of sincere obedience, and so denies and insults the very *authority*, upon which the obligation of the whole law subsists, and thereby destroys the *virtue* of his pretended obedience in all instances whatsoever. I proceed

II. SECONDLY, To lay before you the *doctrine* contained in these words, and shew the reasonableness and equity thereof.

Now the *doctrine* of what we have found to be the purport and meaning of these words is plainly this, "That an impartial, uniform and *universal* obedience to the laws of the *Gospel* is required of all, who are desirous of attaining to the reward which *Christ* has

* James ii. 11.

"promised to the faithful." So that it will be a vain presumption for any *Christian* to hope, to make his peace with GOD for the breach of any *one* law, by even the most *punctual* observation of all the rest. And the reasonableness and equity of this seemingly strict and *rigid* doctrine will, I think, be evident to all, upon a due consideration of the particulars that follow.

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1. *First*, THE reasonableness of such an obedience is evident, because, whatever falls short of it cannot be *sincere*. For he who reserves to himself the liberty of yielding to a *favourite* vice, or neglecting any *necessary* duty, plainly shews that he is *governed* in his religious conduct by some other *principle* than either the *love* of GOD or the *fear* of him; because, as has been before observed, these holy dispositions would have wrought more *effectually* upon him, would have had weight with him in *every* instance, as well as in *any*, and would have put a restraint upon his irregular desires, with the same power and effect in *one* case as well as in *another*. But the truth is plainly this; he allows himself in *this* and not in *that* willful act of transgression, because *one* is, and the *other* is not the sin of his *inclination*; or, because he happens to be under the power of greater temptations to *one* than to the *other*. But a sense of duty, founded upon a love of GOD for his mercies, or a dread of his indignation and *vengeance*, seems to have

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as little share in producing *one effect*, as it has in producing *the other*, so that if the case was to be put of his being under the *same* temptation to any other sin, and of his having the *same* fondness for it, as he has for that in which he indulges himself, no imaginable cause can be assigned, why he would not as easily yield to the *second* invitation to sin, as he did to the *first*. So that there is all the reason in the world, to think that the *same weakness* of *faith* that makes a man give way to temptation in *one* case, will certainly do so in *every other*, that is attended with the self same circumstances. But certainly such an *un-sincere* service as this is, an obedience so much without *principle*, can never entitle a man to a reward, or be accepted of by ALMIGHTY GOD, as a *reasonable service*.

2. *Secondly*, THE reasonableness of GOD's requiring from us an *universal* obedience, without allowing men to make exceptions of any *particular* law, according to their own humour or fancy, will farther appear, if we consider that all men do allow the fitness and *justice* of GOD's punishing all transgressions save only such as they delight in. Ask the *covetous* man what he thinks of *profaneness* and prodigality, and he will instantly tell you that it is a sin of a very deep dye, is justly provoking to GOD, and usually attended with many other sins, and upon the whole does highly *deserve punishment*. The *prodigal* and
profuse

profuse *spendthrift* at the same time will be forward in passing as true a censure upon the *covetous* man's offence, and will lay load upon him without mercy, and will, with a good deal of emotion too, declare his abhorrence of such a crime, and thinks no punishment can be too severe for such an *unnatural* sin; for such downright *idolatry*. The man, who gives himself up to sensual pleasures, will express great wonder, how any one can be guilty of the *baseness* of *oppression*, or of *theft*, and *robbery*; and think the laws that punish *such* enormities to be very just and necessary.

BUT what does all this amount to, but a plain confession on all hands, that *all sins deserve punishment*. For the exceptions that men make of the sins of their own *particular inclinations* are all the mere effects of prejudice and partiality, and only shew how weak men can be, and how grossly they can impose upon themselves when they are resolved not to part with a *beloved* lust. For how can a man's fondness for one particular sin, any ways alter the nature of it, or make it less liable to punishment, or less the object of GOD's displeasure than it was before, or than it is in any other person? From this acknowledgment therefore that all men are ready to make of the guilt of any sin in every case but their own, 'tis plain that according to the *unprejudiced* and *impartial* judgment of all men, *all sin deserves punishment*, and that it is highly reasonable that men should be required

to avoid *all* sin, and obey *all* GOD's laws without exception.

3. *Thirdly*, THAT it is highly just and reasonable that GOD should require an *universal* obedience to all the laws of the Gospel, will moreover appear from the many great, and even intolerable *absurdities* that will follow from our supposing the case to be otherwise than has been represented. For to suppose that GOD will allow of the exceptions that men may make to some of his laws in favour of their *particular* inclinations and tempers, is the same thing as to suppose, that GOD, though he is of *purser eyes than to behold evil*, does however allow in one man or other the *practice* of *all sins* of what kind soever.

FOR 'tis well known that men have not all *one* and the same *favourite* vice; but there is as great a difference between their inclinations with regard to sin, as to any other matters: So that if every man is to be indulged *in one*, no sin could be named, which would not, by being the *darling* of one person or other, be exempted from punishment, and connived at by ALMIGHTY GOD as *innocent* and inoffensive: But how inconsistent is this with the *purity*, and *holiness*, and *justice* of GOD? How absurd is it, that he who has declared that he *cannot look on iniquity* *, should yet permit all sorts, and degrees of it, provided

* Habak. i. 13.

they are found in *different* persons, according to the difference of their inclinations and tempers. That he who expects the service of the *whole* heart, should yet be content with a *share* of it only, and allow any lust (provided 'tis but *one*) to have a place with him in the affections of every *Christian*; that the *adulterer*, the *blasphemer*, the *vain swearer*, the *drunkard*, and the *extortioner*, shall be secure of GOD's favour and of the reward of the righteous, if they are each of them careful but to offend in *one point only*, and do not add any *other* sin to the sin of their *inclination*, how great and provoking soever *that sin* of their inclination may be.

How impossible is it, that *Christ Jesus*, who came into the world to reform it and make it better, and to give us a *perfect rule of life* and *manners*, and to teach us particularly to deny *our worldly lusts*, should after all defeat and destroy his own design, by thus giving *encouragement* to sin and wickedness, and allowing men to *indulge* their worldly lusts? For what else can the permission of *one* willful sin, in *every* person, in the end amount to, but an intire and abandoned indulgence in *that* which is the sin of *each* man's inclination; and consequently in a more common and *universal* dissoluteness of manners than did ever yet prevail in the very worst times of the world? It is most certain therefore that the obedience which the *Gospel* requires of man is *universal*, and without exception: and that it is infinitely



fit and reasonable that it should be so, because every other supposition is utterly inconsistent with the very nature and perfections of GOD, and with the design and purpose of the SON of GOD's taking human nature upon him and dying for the sins of mankind. I proceed now as I proposed,

III. THIRDLY, To consider some of the *pretences* that men usually make to excuse themselves for falling short of *that perfection* which the *doctrine* of the *text* supposes to be necessary in all *Christians*. 'Tis too plain to be denied that many persons, who have look'd upon themselves to be far advanced towards *perfection* in their *Christian* course, have yet allowed themselves in *one darling* sin or *other*, through a *vain hope* of its being consistent with the service of GOD, and a *regenerate state*. Now because this is such a sort of behaviour as, if persisted in to the last, must be *fatal*; I shall make an inquiry into some of those pretences by which men usually seek to justify themselves. And here they say,

I. *First*, THAT there is a *real* distinction to be made between sins; that some of them are *mortal*, and others *venial*; that although there are some of so odious a nature, that they cannot consist with a *regenerate state*, yet that there are others of a *less malignant* kind, such as are in themselves *pardonable*, and will need no other than a *general* repentance, and that the

holy

holy *Scriptures* themselves make this *distinction*. And therefore since all the sins which they allow themselves in, are of this latter sort, they hope they may *speake peace* to their souls, and not be under any *fears* upon the account of those few *light offences* of which they are guilty.

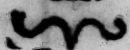
INDEED this *distinction* of sins into *mortal* and *venial*, or such as do deserve punishment, and will be punished, without repentance, and such as are *pardonable* in themselves and will be pardoned though never repented of; I say, this *distinction* of sins has been received, and avowed by the *Church of Rome*; but as it has no manner of *foundation* in those *places of Scripture* which they alledge for the support of it, so it is plainly contrary to many other *texts*, and to the whole *tenor* and design of the *Gospel*. That there is a mighty *inequality* between the guilt of one sin and another is agreed on all hands, but that any known sin is *so small* as not to deserve to be punished at all, is asserted without reason. For as to that *passage* of St. *John*, where he makes a distinction of *a sin unto death*, and *a sin not unto death**, (though it is the most *plausible text* of any other for their purpose) yet no such matter can be proved from it.

THE *Apostle* indeed says that there is *a sin unto death*; a sin of so heinous a nature, as

* 1 John v. 16, 17.

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not to be capable of being pardoned, but will certainly be punished with *death eternal*. But it cannot be proved that the sin the *Apostle* means is not the sin of those who in his time apostatiz'd from *Christianity*, after they had lived for a while in the belief of its *truth* and *divinity*, and had been eye-witnesses of the *miracles* that were wrought in confirmation of it; who as *St. Paul* expresses it, *having been made partakers of the HOLY GHOST, and having tasted of the good word of GOD, and the powers of the world to come, afterwards fell away*. Now there are so many aggravating circumstances in such an *apostacy*, and it is so much of the same kind with that *sin against the HOLY GHOST*, which our blessed *Saviour* declares to be *unpardonable*, that 'tis no wonder that *St. John* should call it *a sin unto death*, and distinguish it from all other sins, which though deadly in themselves too, yet admit of repentance, and being pardonable, may *not be unto death*, but be so effectually washed away by *faith* in *Christ*, and a true and hearty *repentance*, as never to rise up in judgment against those who have been guilty of them.

So that if this be the *Apostle's* meaning, (as very probably it is) what ground is there for the pretended *distinction* of sins into *mortal* and *venial*? Sins may be all of them (as they are) *deadly* in themselves, and yet may some

* Heb. vi. 4, 5.

of them be so heinous as not to admit of *sacrifice* or expiation, whilst others are pardonable upon the *faith* and *repentance* of the offender. But whatever be the meaning of St. *John* in that place, and how much soever *interpreters* differ in explaining it, no meaning whatever may be put upon it, that is a direct contradiction to the *doctrine* of our *Saviour*, as he has laid it down plainly and expressly in the *Gospel*. Now we are told by our *Saviour*, that *whosoever shall break one of the LEAST of his commandments, and [or] † shall teach men so, he shall be called LEAST in the kingdom of heaven* *. By which it is evident, that no sin, however circumstanced, can in itself be *without* guilt, or committed without offence to GOD: But that all *known* and *willful* transgressions, since they are offences against the law of GOD, are for that reason *mortal*, and will exclude those that are guilty of them from the kingdom of heaven. It will not be denied, but if any sins are allowable, they must be such as are committed against those commands of GOD, which in some sense or other are called the *least*; and yet our blessed *Saviour* has expressly declared even *those* to be damnable.

FOR he says, *whosoever shall break one of those least* (that is, one though it be allowed to be the least) of GOD's commandments *shall be*

† See Grotius upon the place. * Mat. v. 19.

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LEAST *in the kingdom of heaven*; that is, shall have no share of the happiness of that place at all, but shall be shut out eternally from the *presence* of GOD, and from the *glory* of his kingdom. I don't know any thing can be more contrary to that *distinction* of sins into *mortal* and *venial*, than these words of our *Saviour* are; for he allows the difference that there is between one sin and another, as to the *degrees* of *guilt* and enormity: He allows us to suppose, that *one* sin may be *small* in comparison of another; but then he will not suffer us to take sanctuary in that *distinction*, nor permit us to practise any sin because 'tis but *a little one*; he does not admit that the *smallness* of the sin may be pleaded in *excuse* of it; he puts the case of a person's transgressing but *one* law, and that one of *the least* too, and yet even *then* he declares him liable to GOD's displeasure, and that *he shall be least*, that is, he shall ever be entirely shut out from the kingdom of heaven.

'Tis in vain therefore for men to shelter themselves under a groundless *distinction* of sins into *mortal* and *venial*, and to buoy themselves up in an opinion of their being in a *safe way*, because their Sins are not of the most *presumptuous* and *wasting* kind. For allowing the *fact* to be true (and yet men are too apt to be *partial* in their own case) I say allowing it to be true, that their sins are *comparatively* small, yet if *wilful* and *unrepented* of, they

they will be sufficient to defeat all their expectations of happiness hereafter. And yet how very common is it for men to quiet themselves in the avowed, and wilful transgression of GOD's laws, upon such pretences?

I AM strictly careful, says one, to observe the directions of the *Gospel*, with regard to all the *branches* of my *duty*; I serve GOD, I love my neighbour, and I do not dishonour my own body. There is indeed one thing, which I am *defective* in, I have hitherto contented myself with joining in the prayers of the *Church*, and hearing the word of GOD constantly and attentively; but I have not yet prevailed upon myself to be present at the *celebration* of the *LORD's Supper*. In this the *LORD* pardon his servant: I acknowledge that herein I transgress a commandment of GOD and my *Saviour*; I am sensible that I am expressly enjoined to *do this in remembrance of CHRIST*: And I design some time or other to discharge my *duty* herein, but at present cannot find leisure for so *strict* a preparation as may be necessary, and so hope I shall be excused.

I AM, says another, as desirous to serve and worship GOD in the *Church*, as any one; I approve of the *prayers* that are used, for public worship, and heartily join in them, when I am present; but I must acknowledge I often forego the opportunity of doing it. My inconvenient distance from Church, the dispatch
I of

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of extraordinary business, the need of rest after a week of fatigue, the serving some convenience in life by travelling upon a Sunday; these are reasons of my frequently neglecting the duty of publick worship, and as they do somewhat lessen the guilt of such transgressions, so I hope my punctuality in all other points will easily procure a pardon for them. And thus will men in other cases endeavour to palliate the faults to which they are inclined by pretending the exactness of their obedience in other cases, and that those irregularities in which they allow themselves are so very small, that they cannot think that GOD will ever punish men for them. But our Saviour's determination, does foreclose every thing that can be said in their excuse, in as much as according to him every willful offence is great enough to condemn a man; *whosoever shall break one of the least of GOD's commandments, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.*

2. BUT Secondly, It is pretended by some, in excuse for their not performing that compleat obedience which the Gospel requires, that whatever transgressions they are guilty of, are only such as their necessities, and the continual difficulties they are in from their unhappy circumstances drive and force them upon. They are in want of almost every thing; and yet are born with the same appetites, and have the same relish of the comforts and conveniencies of life with all others; and this puts them under

der such *violent* temptations to *dishonesty*, or *base compliances*, or to *murmuring* and *discontent*, that they know not how to resist them; and for this reason they *hope* that so very inconsoleable a situation will be an *excuse* for their disobedience *in a few instances*, especially when their *low* condition was not the effect either of *profuseness* or *idleness*.

I must defer the *answer* to this *pretence* to another opportunity.

NOW to GOD the FATHER, GOD the SON, and GOD the HOLY GHOST, be ascribed all honour and glory, praise, might, &c. now and for vemeore. *Amen.*

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...that they know not how to resist
...and for this reason they have that to
...inconsolable a situation will be an excuse
...in their disobedience in a few instances, etc.
...when their condition was not the
...either of weakness or sin.
...I must defer the answer to this question to
...another opportunity.

Now to GOD the Father, GOD the Son,
and GOD the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all
honour and glory, praise, might, &c. now and
for evermore.

...that you may be able to resist
...in your own hearts and minds
...and in your own hearts and minds
...and in your own hearts and minds
...and in your own hearts and minds

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S E R M O N X I I.

Universal Obedience indispensably required by the *Gospel*.

St. J A M E S ii. 10.

Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

I N my late discourse to you upon these words I did undertake the following *particulars*. S E R M O N
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I. FIRST, To *clear* and state the true and exact meaning (so far as I should be able) of the words of the *text*.

II. SECONDLY, To lay before you the *doctrine* contained in them, and the reasonableness and equity thereof.

III. THIRDLY, To consider some of the *pretences* men are wont to make in excuse for their falling short of that *perfection* which the

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doctrine of the text requires at the hands of all men.

IV. FOURTHLY and LASTLY, To make some *inferences* from the whole, for our farther instruction and improvement.

I HAVE already treated at large upon the two first *particulars*, and enter'd upon the third, which was to consider some of the *pretences* men are wont to make in excuse for the falling short of that *perfection* which the *doctrine of the text* requires at the hands of all men. I have answered one pretence and I proceed to another. It is pretended by some

2. Secondly, THAT whatever transgressions they are guilty of, are only such as their *necessities* and the continual difficulties they are in from their *unhappy* circumstances drive and force them upon. They are *in want* of almost every thing, and yet are born with the same appetites and have the same relish of the *comforts* and conveniencies of *life* with all others; and this puts them under such *violent* temptations to *dishonesty*, or *base compliances*, or to *murmuring*, and *discontent*, that they know not how to resist them; and for this reason they *hope* that so very inconsolable a situation will be an *excuse* for their disobedience in a few instances, especially when their *low* condition was not the effect either of *profuseness* or *idleness*.

Now

Now it cannot be denied but the *case* of the *poor* and *necessitous* is a very piteous one. *Extreme poverty* is without question a fore evil, and is attended with divers very grievous *temptations*; but allowing this, does it therefore follow that they are such as cannot be resisted? There is no *state* or *condition* of life whatever, that is free from temptations; and bad as the *case* now represented is, there are *cases* not a whit less dangerous, and which would have as good a title to connivance, if the temptations, to which they are continually exposed, should be complied with, as *poverty* itself can have.

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EVEN that so much *envied condition* of the *rich* and *powerful*, though 'tis much more easy, and upon account of the many comforts of life it is attended with, is much more desirable than *poverty*; yet it is at the same time beset with more temptations, and those *stronger*, than what are found even in the most lamentable and *extreme poverty*. Indeed the danger of *wealth* and *plenty* is represented by our *Saviour* in such terms as make it really terrible. For he tells us that *it is easier for a camel** (or a *camel-rope*, as the original word sometimes signifies †) *to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of GOD*. By which so much at least is to be understood, that it is a matter of great difficulty for a *rich man* to disengage

* Mat. xix. 24. † Vid. Whitby.

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his affections from his worldly possessions, and to keep himself so clear of the temptations to which his *plenty* exposes him, as to live up to the conditions of the *Gospel*, and the terms upon which salvation by *Christ* is to be had.

THIS shews that men being exposed to temptations, from the *circumstances* of life in which they are placed, is no excuse for their compliance with them. Indeed our *Saviour* by saying afterwards, at the 26th verse, *that all things are possible with GOD*, does give rich men grounds to hope, that great as the temptations to sin are from *riches* and *power*, yet that GOD's *grace* will be sufficient to enable men to resist them; and will be granted in the proportion that is necessary: But our *Saviour* does not give the least hint, that the manifold temptations to which the *wealthy* and the *great* are exposed, will be any *cloak* for their *sin*. He gives no kind of reason to expect, that the *strength* of the temptation will be allowed to be pleaded in *excuse* of the guilt of yielding to it; and why indeed should it be expected, since he does never *suffer them to be tempted above that they are able*, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it *?

Now if there is no room to plead the power of temptation when it is greatest, can the *plea*, think you, be allowed, when it is less? If the incessant invitations and allurements to sin in the

* 1 Cor. x. 13.

midst

midst of *riches* and *honours*, must all be resisted and denied, will the difficulties of duty in a *low station*, which are confessed to be but small upon comparison, be yet allowed of as a just reason for disobedience? 'Tis absurd to suppose it. And indeed to hope for an *indulgence* in sin from a meanness of circumstances is as groundless and unreasonable as any thing well can be. For what do they who make this plea, but declare that they will *serve themselves* in the first place, and GOD no farther than is consistent with plenty and the enjoyment of the *good things* of the world? If they can be permitted to serve GOD and their *bellies* too, they shall like the matter well enough; but if they must serve GOD in distress and necessity, in want and in poverty, such a *suffering religion* is not for their taste, and therefore they hope for a *dispensation* in those particulars that bear so hard upon their *natural* desires and inclinations.

BUT who can ever think that HE, to whom the service of the whole heart, and the obedience of every thought and imagination is due, will suffer men to prefer their *own* lusts to *his* service, and will require their obedience no farther than it suits with their own inclination and humour, with their ease, and the gratification of their appetites?—As such an indulgence would be most unreasonable, so have the *holy Scriptures* very fully and *emphatically* declared

against it; for we are there taught, that if we prefer any thing to the service of GOD, if we love any thing better or *more than him*, we are not worthy of him. *He that loveth father or mother more than me*, says our blessed Saviour, *is not worthy of me*: And *he that loveth son or daughter more than me*, is not worthy of me *. And he declares in another place, that *if any man will come after him, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow him* †.

IN these passages of Scripture it is evidently required of every Christian, to be willing to forego all the comforts, and pleasures, and conveniencies of life, to part with all worldly enjoyments, nay even with *life itself*, whenever they stand in competition with the plain duties of religion. 'Twill be in vain therefore for any man to hope for the favour of GOD, unless he has the courage to deny himself, and to controul and thwart his appetites whenever they stand in the way of religion, and cannot be gratify'd but by breaking of a commandment. The pretence of indigence and necessity, or the force of any other temptation, will be very insufficient pleas: For if it could be allowed in any case, it must be in the case of a man's preserving his own life, and yet this is a reason that will never justify a man for the violation of any known duty. For our Saviour expressly assures us, that *if any man come to him, and hate not*

* Mat. x. 37, 38, &c. † Mat. xvi. 24.

(that

(that is does not prefer *Christ's* service before) *his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be his disciple* *.

3. *Thirdly*, 'Tis pretended by some as an excuse, for a *defective* obedience, that the sins they are guilty of are all the necessary consequences of that *business*, or *employment*, that profession or state of life which the providence of GOD has placed them in, as the means whereby they are to maintain themselves and families. For they hope that although they should comply with the usual arts of their *profession* or trade, even such as are inconsistent with the simplicity of the *Gospel*, this would not however be charged upon them as a fault, because their *business* being a very *useful* one for the Common-wealth, and *necessary* to be followed by some persons or other, if they do sometimes transgress their duty, in following their *necessary calling*, surely that alone can never exclude them from the favour of GOD, and the reward of the righteous.

Now in *answer* to this *pretence*, I do in the first place lay it down for a certain truth; that (notwithstanding what is here alledged in this case) there is no *calling* or *employment* whatsoever, that is of downright necessity in the Common-wealth, but is *lawful* in itself and may be managed both with *safety* and *inno-*

* Luke xiv. 26.

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cence: And if so, then whatever danger there may be in *some* employments, from the variety and force of the *temptations* to which they expose men, yet this is no *excuse* for the transgressions which may happen on that account. The *hazard* of sinning, by being so constantly in the way of temptation, is a reason for the more strict *guard* and *caution*; but none at all to make us think that a compliance will be *innocent*. And if after *frequent trials* we find ourselves unable to overcome the temptation, and we are evermore *led captive* by the sin that does so *easily beset* us, we must take away the *occasion* of our sin; and quit that *business* of life, whatever it be, that is thus the never failing *cause* of our transgressing.

It must be owned, that this may be many times a great *hardship* to many people, because the *employments* they are in, may be the means of supporting their families, with *comfort* and in plenty; and this will certainly *justify* them in making *trial* once and again, whether it be not possible to keep on their *business* and preserve their *virtue* too. But if they find that their *endeavours* prove all to no purpose, if they are constantly *disappointed* and defeated in the conflict and struggle, the *rule* for them to go by is plain; what they cannot go on with *innocently*, they must give up *couragiously*; and if this *conduct* should be attended with many difficulties, nay, if it should end in distress and poverty, (though I

believe this never was the case) yet it would however be no more than THAT *denial* of themselves, and THAT *taking up the cross*, which our *Saviour* has made a necessary condition of being his *disciple*.

HE has indeed fully determined this case himself, and given us a rule for our behaviour under the difficulties of it. *If*, says he, *thy right eye offend thee pluck it out and cast it from thee, for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee cut it off and cast it from thee, for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell**. For the meaning of these words is plainly this;

IF thy right eye, or thy right hand, or any thing that you value as much, or would be as unwilling to part with, as either of these, do lead you into sin, and are the never failing cause of your transgressing, 'twill be your duty to pluck out that right eye, and cut off that hand, that are the unhappy occasions of sin in you; and the instruments of your offending GOD: You must take away the cause of your sinning whatever it be, and what difficulty or uneasiness soever you may find in so doing. For there is no comfort, no honour, no profit, in the possession of any thing tem-

* Mat. v. 29, 30.

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poral, that can any ways make amends for the loss of *body* and *soul* in *hell*.

So that the duty, which our *Saviour* has enjoined us in these words, is that of taking away the *causes* of sin, as much as is possible, and so far as it is lawful to do it; that is, whenever it may be done without omitting a known duty, or offending GOD by the violating of some other commandment. This pretence therefore, in *excuse* for sin, from its being the consequence of that kind of *business* by which we maintain ourselves and families, is vain and groundless: For if all our care, and all our attention, is not sufficient to preserve us from sin whilst we continue the exercise of our *business*, we have nothing else to do but to leave it: and let not the love of riches, nor the dread of poverty, keep us from what is so plainly our duty: *For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul*?*

4. *Fourthly*, 'Tis pretended by some, that the sins which they allow themselves in, are the sins of their *age*, or of their *temper* and *constitution*; and that these not being of their own choice, they hope to be excused, for doing what is so *natural*, and which is not without great difficulty, if at all, to be avoided.

* Mat. xvi. 26.

ONE is just in the *prime* and *flower* of his age, he is in full perfect health and in the very vigour of life, and therefore if his heart goes along with his affections, if he allows himself in those pleasures which are so *natural* to his youth, and so *agreeable* to his inclinations, he hopes his obedience in *other* cases will make amends.

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ANOTHER is got towards the end of his life, and is encompassed with the *usual infirmities* of *old age*, and this he hopes will excuse his being *discontented* and querulous, his being *peevish* and morose. He has had also so much experience of the baseness and ingratitude of the world, that he can place no security, can put no confidence in the promises or *obligations* of *friends* or relations, but thinks the only *sure way* of gaining *that* respect, and securing *those* regards, which are due to the *hoary head*, and which *old age* is delighted with, is to have much wealth, and great possessions; and wherewithal to engage dependants, by having *much to give*: And therefore under so great a temptation he hopes his *parsimony* will not be deemed *criminal*. He was no ways subject to these infirmities till *old age* brought them upon him, and what is so plainly an effect of *that*, he thinks, will never be a matter of charge and accusation against him.

A THIRD is of a *choleric* and *hasty* disposition, it is as natural for him to fly into *fury* and passion, upon every contradiction or affront,

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front, as it is for fire to burn when proper fewel is administred to it. And therefore if he gives vent to his anger, by *clamour* and evil-speaking, or by *swearing* and cursing, or if his rage carries him on sometimes to acts of *malice* and revenge, he hopes his *temper* will excuse him; and that what is so much owing to *complexion* and *nature*, will be allowable in him, who is *otherwise* punctual enough in the discharge of his duty.

To THESE pretences I might add many more that men usually make in excuse for *that sin*, which is the sin of their *inclination*, and which they therefore call *natural*, and the effect of their very *constitution*, but it will be needless, because they are all of the same kind, and what shall be said in *answer* to these already mentioned, will serve as fully to silence all others that can be made.

Now in *answer* to these *pleas*, let it be observed, that how plausible soever they may seem at first sight, yet no man can really be deceived or imposed upon by them, if he reads the *Scriptures* seriously, and with an *honest* and *true heart*: For there we are told that we must *deny ourselves*, if we would be *Christ's Disciples* *. The *Christian life* is frequently in *Scripture* represented under the names of a *warfare*, a *pilgrimage*, a *race*, and a *combat*, and we all know that *these* are not any of them,

* Matt. xvi. 24.

to be undertaken with hopes of success, without toil and labour, diligence and attention. The Gospel does every where suppose *some difficulty* in living up to the *strictness* of that obedience, which is there required, and accordingly the *gate* of *heaven* is represented to be *strait*, and we are cautioned against being too secure of our being admitted into it; being bid to *strive to enter in*; and are told, that *many will seek to enter in and shall not be able* §.

How foolish and how vain therefore must it be for men to ground their *hopes* of a *licence* for sin on the *difficulties* of obedience, and the struggles they must have with their natural inclinations, when a conquest over them is the very condition of *Christianity*, and *that* upon which salvation *itself* depends.

FOR if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live *. And the grace of GOD, that is, the will of GOD as it is revealed in the Gospel, is affirmed by St. Paul, to have appeared to all men to teach them, that they are to deny all ungodliness and worldly lust; and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world †. And Christ is said to have given himself for us, not only that he might redeem us from all iniquity, or rescue us from the guilt of sin, and the

§ Luke xiii. 24. * Rom. viii. 13. † Titus ii. 11, 12, &c.
punish-

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punishment of it, but also that he might *purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works*†. And *Christians*, in consideration of the great and precious promises of the *Gospel*, are all required to *cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of GOD**; But where will be the denial of *ungodliness and worldly lusts*? where will be the *zeal for good works*, if a man may allow himself in the sin of his *inclination*, and to which his age or his complexion do most dispose him?

BUT after all, *temptations* have not that mighty *overbearing* force in them that is here supposed. What strength and power they have, is greatly owing to the *perverseness* of men's hearts, and their own previous *disposition* to sin. So that indeed they deceive themselves, when they are evermore charging what is *criminal* in them, upon the *power* of *Satan*, and the *strength* of *temptation*: For the *devil* and the *world* do acquire the ascendant they sometimes have over men, from the treachery of men's own hearts. And then who is to blame that temptations have in many cases so much strength and power? Is it not the man himself who has suffered his *heart* and inclinations to be *corrupted*? Let him therefore no longer endeavour to *screen* himself under the supposed *strength* of *temptations*, but let him own, which

† Tit. ii. 14. * 2 Cor. vii. 1.

is the truth, that whatever strength *they* have, it has its foundation in his own heart, and that he is therefore answerable himself for all the mischievous consequences of a compliance with them. Let him consider, that a *bribe*, for instance, would have had no influence upon him, if his heart had not been first corrupted; nor *beauty* have caused him to go astray, if he had not beforehand been a *slave* to impure thoughts and desires. But there can be no occasion to pursue this matter any farther. I proceed therefore in the

IV. FOURTH and LAST place to make some *inferences* from what has been said, for our farther instruction and improvement. And

I. *First*, IF the *terms* of salvation are so *strict*, if no obedience less than *universal* will be accepted; if he that offends in *one* point, knowingly and wilfully, is in some sense guilty of *all*, and will certainly fall short of heaven and happiness, then ought all men, even the very best, to be very careful in examining their hearts, lest any *secret sin* be harboured and entertained there; lest when they are for the most part observant of GOD's laws, they should allow themselves in some one practice or other, which, though no *flagrant* wickedness, may nevertheless be a deliberate and known *offence* against him.

THE CASE of the *generality* of *Christians* is such, that if a man be not *licentious*, if he does not *notoriously* transgress, he is apt to think him-

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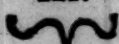
self very far advanced in his *Christian* course. But the *Gospel* requires much more than this: If he is no adulterer, no thief, no common swearer, he is so far to be commended, but then such a *negative* righteousness will not be sufficient; we must not only eschew these *evil works*, but we must *do good* likewise. To this *abstaining* from evil, we must add a regular and fervent *devotion*, and an universal *charity*; we must not only not steal, nor deprive any one of what he has a just right to, but we must as we have power and opportunity *communicate* to the relief of the necessitous and oppressed. We must not only not be rude, or inhospitable, or vexatious to our neighbours but be gentle and courteous, yielding and generous. We must not only do our neighbour *no wrong*, but we must *do him all the good* and kind offices that we can.

IN the *examination* of ourselves therefore we should be very careful, not to be too favourable in the judgment that we pass concerning the *state* and condition of our souls, lest we cry *peace, peace, when there is no peace*; we must look *narrowly* into ourselves and search *deep* into our hearts, and take from thence every thought, every imagination that tends towards evil: We must be careful that whilst we *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts*, in the more *gross* instances, we do not defile our minds with *impure thoughts* and desires; that whilst we abhor all outward acts of injustice and

and cruelty, we do not suffer a *secret* envy to possess our minds, nor repine at the plenty and prosperity of other people. That we do not mix *vanity* and ostentation with our religion, nor be carried into *moroseness* and affected singularity, and a contempt of others; nor into a too *free use* of our tongues, by censure and detraction, at the same time that we avoid more open violations of our duty.

MEN are too apt to place the *whole* of religion in those *particular* duties which they themselves discharge, without attending enough to what the Law of GOD requires in other cases: And so are apt to overlook many things which are as necessary as those things which they do perform. But the strictness and perfection of the *Gospel* does not allow such liberties: There are no excepted cases in which it is lawful to transgress. *He that offends in one point is guilty of all.* It should be our care and endeavour therefore to make a continual progress in our *Christian* course; to proceed from strength to strength, from one degree of virtue to another, till we come to be *perfect men in CHRIST JESUS.*

2. *Secondly,* If the terms, or conditions of *salvation* are so *strict*, if no obedience that is less than *universal* will suffice, if the willful, unrepented transgression of any *one* known law will deprive men of happiness, and make them liable to condemnation, what words can express the dreadfulfulness of their condition, who



have lived in the breach of almost every commandment, who have been so far from obeying in *all instances* of their known duty, that they have hardly been obedient *in any*? If the breach of the *least* of GOD's commandments will exclude from heaven, What will be their fate who have transgressed the *greatest*? If no pretence of *age*, or *complexion*, will excuse the compliance with temptation, how grievously will they enhance their punishment, who are so far from having this to plead in their excuse, that they have *courted* temptation, have *voluntarily* listed themselves into the *devil's* service, even without invitation; In one word, (and to conclude) *If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear* *?

Now to GOD the FATHER, GOD the SON, and GOD the HOLY GHOST, THREE Persons and ONE GOD, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour and glory, praise, might, majesty and dominion, both now and evermore.
Amen.

* 1 Pet. iv. 18.

SERMON

SERMON XIII.

The great Danger of presumptuous Sins.

PSALM xix. 12, 13, 14.

Who can understand his errors, cleanse thou me from secret faults.

Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me: Then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength and my redeemer.

TH E Royal Psalmist employs his devotion in this Psalm, by meditating upon the glory and perfections of GOD, and upon the weakness and infirmities of man, SERMON XIII.

and by taking occasion from thence to beg of GOD his gracious assistance, in order to the being rescued from the *power* of those sins to which he was by nature liable.

FROM the *first* to the *seventh* verse he celebrates GOD's glory, in recounting some of the wonderful works of the *creation*, and from the *seventh* to the *twelfth* in displaying the infinite *blessings* and *benefits* that accrue to mankind from the revelation of his will in the *holy Scriptures*, and from thence to the end he reflects upon the *weakness* of human nature, and the *power* and the *necessity* of GOD's *grace*. He confesses his guilt upon the account of former transgressions, and by asking, *who can understand his errors?* strongly affirms himself and all men to be continually subject to them; and that after their best care to preserve themselves in the ways of *religion*, they are nevertheless guilty of many escapes and failings: That sins of *ignorance* and *infirmity* will be certainly chargeable upon all, and notwithstanding their best endeavours they will fall short of perfection, and must stand in need of GOD's mercy, in order to their pardon, and the obtaining his *peace* and *favour*.

UNDER a sense therefore of his own unworthiness, and incapacity of pleasing GOD by an *entire* and complete obedience, the *Psalmist* breaks forth into a *prayer*, that GOD would be pleased to pardon these his *errors* and *secret offences*. That he would *cleanse* his heart from the guilt

guilt of them, whether they were such as he had committed through *ignorance* and *inadvertency*, or such as however conscious he was of their guilt when he committed them, had now escaped his memory, and were past recollection. *Cleanse thou me from secret faults.*

HE then proceeds to beg that although it be the sad condition of *human nature* to be liable to continual *infirmities*, yet that it would please GOD through his *grace* to restrain him from all *grievous* and *willful* transgressions. *Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me.*

BECAUSE he should then hope to be in a state of favour and acceptance, and to be looked upon as upright and innocent, so far at least as not to be in danger of the guilt of a total apostacy from GOD and religion; *So shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.*

AND that he might indeed be so, and might attain to still higher degrees of *perfection* he requires farther, that he might not only be kept back from *presumptuous sins*, but that even the *words* of his *mouth*, and the thoughts of his heart, might all be acceptable to GOD. *Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength and my redeemer.*

MY design is to make these several *petitions* of the *Psalmist's* prayer the subject of my present discourse

course for your instruction; and to shew you that in imitation of his practice, we must

I. FIRST, Make our *natural infirmities* and our *sins of ignorance*, the constant subject of *confession*, and must beg to be *cleansed* from the stain and guilt of them.

II. SECONDLY, That we must especially be careful to *pray* for GOD's *restraining grace* to keep us back from *presumptuous sins*, that they may never get the *dominion* over us. And,

III. THIRDLY, That we should moreover *pray* for a power of attaining to the highest degree of *Christian perfection*; that we may also be enabled so to govern our very *thoughts* and *words*, that they may be all *acceptable in the sight of GOD*.

I. FIRST, We must make our *natural infirmities* and *sins of ignorance*, the constant subject of *confession*, and must beg to be cleansed from the stain and guilt of them.

THE *corruption* of our natures, and the mighty power of sin, is felt and acknowledged by all. Whilst we continue in this vale of misery, encompassed with temptations and exposed to the *fiery darts* of the *devil*, it will be our constant unhappiness to fail in our duty in one point or other, through *surprise* and inadvertency, and ignorance at least, if in no more criminal way. This happens not because

cause the duties of *religion* are really impracticable, but from that degeneracy introduced by the *fall* of our *first parents*, whereby our *inclinations* are so disposed towards evil, that they will in one degree or other prevail against the *dictates* of *reason* and *religion*, so far at least, as for ever to exclude us from all pretensions to a *sinless perfection*.

AND in this case it can be no wonder that in many things we offend, even when we do not so much as apprehend the *kind*, or the *degree* of our guilt; much less are we to wonder that through the *multitude*, and the daily *incurfion* of such offences as these, we do not distinctly remember them all, especially with all their circumstances of aggravation. But as all these fins of *frailty* and of *ignorance*, are still the effects of a *corrupt* heart, that yields too easily to the snares of *Satan*, so they are justly liable to GOD's displeasure, and stand in need of pardon, and must be both confessed and *repented of* by all who hope for forgiveness. This we find was the holy *Pfalmist's* opinion, and agreeably thereunto he pray'd that GOD *would cleanse* him from his *secret faults*. And this we are sure was *St. Paul's* opinion too; for although his fury against the first *Christians*, when being exceedingly mad against them, he persecuted them from city to city, was all the effect of zeal for GOD, yet he does not by any means acquit himself from guilt herein, but acknowledges

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himself a grievous offender upon the account of the mischiefs of this his misguided *zeal*, and loads himself with the imputation of being a *blasphemer* and *injurious* *.

AND altho' he obtained mercy from GOD in the pardon of these sins because they proceeded from *ignorance* and *unbelief*, yet he does not therefore pronounce himself *innocent*. He confesses the *grace* of GOD was still *exceeding abundant* † towards him, nay he declares himself one of the *chief of sinners* ‡ in this very case, and that he obtained mercy, that he might be an *example* and a *proof* of CHRIST's *long-suffering* ||, in thus pardoning so cruel a persecutor of his *church* and *people*. Whatever circumstances therefore either of *ignorance* or *mistake* may attend the transgression of GOD's law, whereby the enormity of it may be lessened; so far as it shall be in the sinner's power to inform himself better, he will be chargeable with all the effects of his *ignorance*; And if he shall say he has thereby contracted no sin, he will deceive himself, and the truth will not be in him. So much reason have we all to pray with the *Psalmist* in the text, *cleanse thou me from secret faults*.

II. SECONDLY, We must especially be careful to pray for GOD's *restraining* grace to keep us back from *presumptuous* sins, that they

* 1 Tim. i. 13. † ver. 14. ‡ ver. 15. || ver. 16;

may never get the dominion over us. This is the point that I propose principally to enlarge upon, and I shall throw what I have to offer upon it into the following *particulars*.

1. FIRST, I will shew you what the *Psalmist* here means by *presumptuous sins*.

2. SECONDLY, what is meant by their *getting the dominion over men*.

3. THIRDLY, the great danger men expose themselves to, of being brought under the dominion of *presumptuous sins*, who deliberately venture upon the commission of but one of them.

4. FOURTHLY, I will set before you the dreadful case of those over whom *presumptuous sins* have got the dominion.

5. FIFTHLY, I will lay before you the best means for the prevention of all such sins.

6. SIXTHLY, and LASTLY, I will enquire what means are left for men's escaping out of their sad state, who have unhappily allowed themselves in the commission of *presumptuous sins* till they have got the dominion over them.

1. FIRST, I am to shew you what the *Psalmist* here means by *presumptuous sins*. *Presumption* in the first meaning of the word signifies no other than *confidence* and *assurance*; and is applied to denote sins of a *grosser* sort, merely upon the account of that extraordinary *boldness* there is in them, being perpetrated

petrated in defiance of GOD and reason. But for a clearer understanding the true nature of sins that are so called, we must attend to the common distinction of sins into those of *infirmity*, of *ignorance*, and of *wilfulness*.

SINS of *infirmity*, are such as proceed from some undue *passion*, and disorderly appetite, they owe their rise to *anger*, *fear*, *desire*, or some other passion that has exceeded its due bounds, and has overfet the reason and judgment of a man.

SINS of *ignorance* are those which proceed from a mistaken judgment, and are therefore commonly called *errors*, because although there is always some degree of *infirmity*, and it may be *wilfulness* in them, yet the *understanding* is chiefly to be blamed for not having done its part, in passing judgment upon the condition and nature of things.

SINS of *wilfulness* are such as spring from the stubbornness of the *will*, when a man has both a *true understanding* of the whole case, is free also from the disorder and confusion of any *sudden passion*, and from the presence of any violent temptation, and yet through the *perverseness* of his *will* obstinately resolves upon sin. And these as they are the effects of the highest *confidence* and presumption, are justly called *presumptuous sins*, and are the very sins into the nature of which we are inquiring. So that what distinguishes a *presumptuous sin* from others is altogether the *wilfulness*

fulness of it. When a man therefore has a full *conviction* in his mind of the unlawfulness of any action, or might have been convinced of it, if he had not *perversely* resolved against enquiring about it, and yet in defiance of the *light* of his own *reason*, the motions of GOD's *Holy Spirit*, and the repeated rebukes of his own *conscience*, resolves to accomplish his wicked purpose, whether of *lust* or of *revenge*, or of *injustice*; as his sin is *wilful*, so is it in the same degree *presumptuous*. I come now

2. SECONDLY, To shew you what is meant by *presumptuous sins* getting the *dominion* over men. Now man being a *free agent*, and always so far master of his own actions, as not to be under a direct necessity of sinning, I suppose the *dominion* of *sin* over the faculties of men must be understood in some such qualify'd sense, that the sinner may, by the assistance of GOD's *grace*, be always in a capacity of freeing himself from those chains with which he is bound. That how great slaves soever men may be to sin, as their slavery is from themselves, and the effect of their own *choice*, so there is always a possibility of their being rescued from it. But notwithstanding this, the power of *presumptuous* sins over the minds of those who are guilty of them, is very great, and may in some cases well be said to have got the *dominion* over them.

MANY

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MANY are the tokens of this sad slavery and subjection to sin and *Satan*, but there are *three* which are above others remarkable, and which I shall therefore take notice of.

1. THE FIRST, Is when men have sinned themselves past sense of *shame*.

2. SECONDLY, When they are got to such a degree of boldness as to have no sense of *fear* in the commission of sin.

3. THIRDLY, When their hearts are so hardened as to have no *stings* of conscience, no remorse, and uneasiness of mind when they reflect upon the sins they have committed.

1. THE FIRST token of a man's being in this state of slavery is, when he has sinned himself past all sense of *shame*.

SHAME is an uneasiness in the mind that arises from a man's being under the sense of having in some degree or other stained his reputation, and brought himself into disesteem and disgrace. This passion is founded in the regard men have to the opinion of others, and when they imagine themselves to have lost the esteem of the world upon the account of their being defective in such things which they themselves look upon to be *excellent* and *praiseworthy*. And there is no passion in human nature that affects the mind in a more *sensible* manner; its impressions are very strong and it will operate upon *generous* hearts, when no other passion can. For which reason it is looked upon as one of the strongest fences of
religion

religion and virtue, and the most effectual restraint from immorality and profaneness. When a man therefore, either by degrees, and by a long custom in sinning, or by some *one dreadful* and flagitious crime, has at once got the *mastery* of his *modesty*, regards not the disesteem of the world, is no longer *ashamed when he commits abomination, neither can he blush** : As he has thereby deprived himself of one of the best securities against sin, so is there but too much reason to think him one, over whom his sins have already got *dominion*, and that to such a degree too, that without some *special* providence of GOD, some extraordinary interposition of the *divine grace*, there seems but little likelihood of his ever regaining his liberty.

2. SECONDLY, Another token of men's being under the *dominion* of *presumptuous* sins is, their having no sense of *fear* in the commission of sin.

FEAR is a *passion* placed in man for his greater security and preservation, that he may thence be spurred to shun what he believes will do him hurt, or bring his happiness into danger. And this is a *passion* that acts in a way full as *forcible* as *shame* does. In one respect its power is still greater; for *this* will have influence sometimes when *shame* and *modesty* are quite subdued. And a man may have

* Jer. vi. 15.



a check in his sinful course, from the apprehensions of mischief and unhappiness that may follow, who has set his face *like a flint*, and has hardened himself against all impressions, from *shame* and *modesty*: For doubtless there are some who have lost all sense of *reputation* and esteem, who yet retain a good deal of regard to their own *safety*, and dread the misery and unhappiness to which a criminal life does naturally lead. So that he whom *this principle* of nature has no power over, may be looked upon as standing upon the very brink of perdition. He is so far under the *dominion* of his sins, that if he is not quite *incorrigible*, there are but very small hopes of his growing better. And yet there is a still greater token of the power and *dominion* of *presumptuous* sins over the hearts of men, and that is

3. THIRDLY, When they are so hardened, that they have no *stings* of *conscience*, no remorse and anguish of mind, by reflecting afterwards upon the sins they have committed.

THIS is the last and saddest token of a slavish subjection to sin. And this makes the sinner's case very near desperate. This is that dreadful *obduracy*, in which a long custom of sinning does sometimes end, the conquering which the *Prophet Jeremiah* resembles to a natural impossibility. For sin is in itself so *base*, and *dishonourable*, is also attended with so many
temporal

temporal inconveniencies, and will certainly be followed with so *dreadful* a *destruction* hereafter, that *he* with whom these things have no weight, no not so far as to make him start at his danger, or question his security, or reproach himself for the doing, what the laws and reasoning of all mankind in all ages have marked as infamous, *such* a one whose conscience is thus *seared as it were with a hot iron*, is, above all others that can be named, in the very *gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity*; When he is thus forsaken by GOD and suffered to pursue his follies with blindness and fury, without remorse and without reflection; if his case is not quite *desperate*, yet is it a very *forlorn* one; and if the *power* of *sin* has not wholly *destroy'd* the freedom of his *will*, it has certainly so *impaired* it, that *he*, of all others, must be looked upon as under that *dominion* of *sin*, against which the *Psalmist* pray'd in my *text*. I come now

3. THIRDLY, To shew you the great danger men expose themselves to of falling under the *dominion* of *sin*, in the manner before described, who will allow themselves in the commission of but *one presumptuous sin*.

ANY sin, although a sin of *infirmity*, and in comparison of others a small one, may, by frequent repetition, get so great a *power* over men, as, for the most part, to subdue their liberty, and hardly leave them masters of their own actions. This is frequently seen

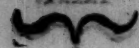
in those too common sins of swearing and drunkenness; but this power is not attained at once; it is the effect of many *particular* acts of sins, and of a repeated indulgence in them, whereby the *shame* and *fear* of transgressing are by unperceivable degrees worn off. But many *presumptuous* sins subdue and confound the sinner's liberty at once, unhinge all the faculties of his soul at one stroke, and bring him in danger of the *great transgression*, of absolute and final impenitence. They harden the heart and lay the conscience waste, in a moment, and make the return to a good mind and a serious sense of religion extremely difficult.

BECAUSE indeed every *presumptuous* sin is the pure effect of *wilfulness*, of an obstinate resolution, in spite of the checks of *conscience*, of the motions of GOD's *Holy Spirit*, and of clear *knowledge* and conviction: And what means can we think will be effectual to reclaim a man so perverse and head-strong? If the charms and comforts of innocence could not restrain him from committing *abomination*: Now that his mind is defiled and a deadly guilt contracted, there is but little reason to think that his resolution will be increased; if he fell by temptation before, he will hardly struggle against it now, since he has now a *new* difficulty upon his hands, he must get the *wounds* and breaches *healed*, which his late guilt has made, by a change of mind, and

a sorrow for what has past, before he can be in any way prepared for a *fresh* conflict. SERMON
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AND accordingly it is generally found in sad and woful experience, that *one presumptuous* sin is but the forerunner of *others*, and such as are commonly still *more flagitious* and provoking. This is the usual case even of those who do not continue all their days in a state of impenitence and rebellion. *David* himself, who had so long experienced the loving-kindness of GOD unto him, and was under such *thorough convictions* of duty and Religion, when he had once *presumptuously* sinned against GOD, by committing adultery with the wife of a *brave* and *faithful* subject, does not stop there, but, after a disappointment in his *scheme* for *concealing* his shame, seeks to cover *one* injury by committing *another* still more terrible: He deliberately resolves to destroy the *brave* man he had before so grievously injured, and he adds one of the most ugly and worst circumstanced *murders* that could be devised to the *sin* of *adultery*. Nor does it appear that from the time of this dreadful fact, he had any *remorse* upon the occasion of it, till GOD sent his *Prophet*, well nigh a year after, to bring him to a sense of himself and his duty.

AND what can be a greater proof of the horrid influence even of *one presumptuous* sin towards the searing the conscience, and destroying all *sentiments* of *pity* and *good nature*, as well as *religion*? So much reason had



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David, and so much reason have we all, to beg earnestly of GOD to *keep us back from presumptuous sins*, since as they are highly provoking to GOD, so are they commonly the wretched *parents* of a long train of sins and follies, and too often of *continual* disobedience, and *final* *impenitence*. And this brings me to another particular, and that is to set before you

4. FOURTHLY, THE dreadful case of those over whom *presumptuous sins* have got the *dominion*.

AND can any state be more truly miserable than that of those who have finned themselves into so *base* a degree of *slavery*, as hardly to think of using any *manly endeavours* to rescue themselves out of it? To be so entangled with their lusts, and bound with the chain of their sins, as to have no *heart* to attempt an escape? To be continually pushed on from one sin to another, without *shame* or *fear*, without check or remorse, to the daily *increase* of guilt, and the *lessening* the strength of their natural powers; when yet a *heartly repentance* and a *thorough reformation* must happen, or their doom is sealed, and their misery must be endless?

BUT let us suppose, notwithstanding this his imminent danger, that a *presumptuous sinner* should, by the *peculiar* mercy of GOD, in affording him the aids of an *extraordinary grace*, be *snatched like a fire-brand out of the fire*, be restored to peace and GOD's *favour*, by a

thorough

thorough repentance, yet will he dearly pay SERMON
XIII. for his criminal pleasures, in those dreadful *pangs of conscience* he must undergo, as well as from many other sad effects of his sins. For *presumptuous* sins are *distempers* of the most *malignant* kind, and are not to be cured but by strong and *severe* remedies. It is not a single sigh or tear, or transient sorrow that will wipe out the guilt of them.

THEY will long remain a *load* upon the mind, notwithstanding the best care that can be used for the removal of it. For there is something in all sins of the *presumptuous* kind, that when a man comes to a *true sight* and sense of them, will give him very uncomfortable reflections. If they are sins of a *deeper dye*, such as have not only been *willful*, but *horrid* also, they can hardly be thought upon without *confusion*, and the unhappy sinner will have just cause to say, in the words of *Job*, *I have sinned, what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men? Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so that I am a burden to myself**? But sins, that have the *fewest* circumstances of aggravation in them, are yet so base and so unworthy, that no man can be brought to think *seriously* of them, without very *uneasy reflections* upon his own folly and ingratitude. So that they who have the *fewest*, and the least criminal acts of *presumptuous* wicked-

* Job vii. 21.

ness to answer for, will find trouble and anguish enough, when they come to a *serious* mind, to make them thoroughly sensible of the *comforts* of *innocence*; and that no pleasure in sin can countervail those *stings* and reproaches of *conscience* which must be found in every ACCEPTABLE repentance.

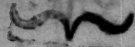
NOR is this *remorse* and anguish the attendant of repentance in the act of *conversion* only, it will frequently return upon those who have been *presumptuous* sinners long after their sins are thoroughly repented of and pardoned. For what good hopes soever they may justly have of their being *restored* to *favour*, as the *remembrance* of their guilt must remain, so their *conscience* will sometimes awaken their *old* reflections. In which case although their condition may be *safe*, and they may have no great doubt concerning it, yet as they cannot be altogether free from *care* about it, so must they ever be conscious of the *baseness* and folly of their sins, and this must bring a *cloud* over their minds in all their *enjoyments*, and very much abate that *cheerfulness* of spirit which is the chief happiness of life, and the *reward* and privilege of the *innocent* only.

AND what still heightens the unhappiness of the *presumptuous* sinner is, that his *grief* and *shame* most usually return when he is *least* able to bear them, when he is under trouble upon the account of some *new* distress and affliction.

affliction. Thus when *Joseph's* brethren had been three days imprisoned by him in *Egypt*, and he refused to dismiss them, without their leaving one of their number behind them, as a *hostage* and security for their bringing their youngest brother to him, they then reproach themselves for the guilt of their brother *Joseph's* blood, (of which there is no reason to think they had not repented many years before) and they said one to another, *We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not bear. Therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them saying, spake I not unto you, saying, do not sin against the child, and ye would not bear, therefore, behold also his blood is required* *. This is one of the uncomfortable circumstances of those over whom *presumptuous* sins have ever had the *dominion*, even after their reconciliation to GOD by a *sincere* repentance.

BUT there are other sad effects of such sins. For the *presumptuous* sinner, as he cannot avoid reflecting upon his sins when the day of affliction is come, so it seldom happens but he is *visited* by GOD, in some *remarkable* manner, and with such circumstances as make his guilt *visible* in his punishment. Men should be careful not to call every grievous calamity sent upon any person or family a *judgment*

* Gen. xlii. 21, 22.



of GOD; and they should be very backward in their censures of those who suffer under his afflicting hand. But when men's sins are known as well as their afflictions, and are *such* as for their *enormity* do seem to *challenge* GOD's justice, it can be no *breach of charity* to believe *one* to be the true and real cause of the *other*. And this method of providence is highly agreeable to GOD's wisdom; for his hatred of sin is hereby publickly signified to the world, that men may thence be taught the danger of it, and may take warning and *do no more presumptuously*.

I BELIEVE the experience and observation of most men will furnish them with *sad examples* of the mischievous consequences of *presumptuous* sins, even upon those who have escaped out of the *dominion* of them, and are become *sincere* penitents. But 'tis best to seek for examples in the *holy Scriptures*. And we may find *one* there *very particularly* remarkable to this purpose, which I shall therefore mention. When *Nathan* was sent to *David* to bring him to a sense of his guilt in his *complicated* sin of *adultery* and *murder*, although in the conclusion of his message, after *David* had confessed and repented of his sin, *Nathan* declared, that *the LORD* had put it away, yet he gives him no hopes that the evils before threatened should not be executed upon him to the uttermost. And therefore as he told him that *the sword* should *never* depart from his
house,

house, and that GOD would raise up evil against him out of his own house *, so was the same very punctually accomplished. And notwithstanding he had the comfort of knowing that his sin was pardoned, he was, through the whole course of his life, continually harassed with misfortunes and distresses, and such as, to a good man and a great Prince, must have been most afflicting.

FOR one of his sons was guilty of *shameless incest* with one of his daughters; *that son* was barbarously murdered by another: He, after he had obtained his father's pardon, and was again received into favour, *ungratefully* abused the great indulgence that was shewn him, and when by *craft* and *dissimulation*, he had *stoln* away the hearts of his father's subjects, entered into a most wicked and *unnatural* conspiracy to deprive him of his throne and life; and when it pleased GOD to defeat the barbarous design, by destroying the *rebel*, and turning all the hearts of those that joined him, as *one man*, and making them join with *David's* friends, in restoring him, and establishing his throne; the *death* of this wretch *Absalom*, gave the tender and *indulgent father* so much trouble of mind, that he had no relish of the success, but the *victory itself* was turned into *mourning*, and his grief was so great, as to be thought by his subjects, to have exceeded all reason and decency.

* 2 Sam. xii. 10, 11, 12.



So that as he must have been very unhappy, both from his *fears* of what might be the end of so *dangerous* a *rebellion*, as also from so many affronts and indignities he met with whilst it raged, so did not the matter seem to be much mended with him, when every thing was quiet and calm. For the death of his *darling* dashed every thing with melancholy, and destroyed all the sweets of the *victory*. Indeed after he had defiled his soul with the guilt before mentioned, he seemed very seldom to be free from vexation and trouble; so that misery and unhappiness pursued him to his very grave. Such is the *vengeance* that usually follows the commission of *presumptuous* sins. I come now

5. FIFTHLY, To lay before you the best means for the *prevention* of all such sins.

1. *The First* and most effectual of all others is, to make it a constant part of our *daily* devotions to intreat GOD to *keep us back* from them. We are of ourselves unable to *resist* sin; so that if we should be left to our own *unruly passions*, we should soon run into excesses and disorders of all kinds; and we should know *no measure* in sinning. This being our unhappy case, GOD is pleased to interpose with his Almighty Hand to keep us from falling. But although he does this in ten thousand instances, where men have never so much as asked the favour, yet he has no where promised to do it, but in answer to our prayers.

ers. For the promise of *having* is made only to him that *asks*, and of *finding* to him that *seeks*. If we would therefore secure ourselves against the force of temptations, we must be sure to ask the *assistance* of GOD's *Holy Spirit*, and we must do it with earnestness, and af-fiduity; *labouring fervently in prayers that we may stand perfect and complete in all the will of GOD* *.

2. Secondly, To our incessant prayers for GOD's *grace*, we must add our own unwea-ried endeavours to keep ourselves from sin. We are not indeed able of ourselves to do a-ny thing, and *our sufficiency is of GOD*; yet as we are commanded to *work out our own salvation*, so we must be careful to do it, by a willing compliance with the *motions* of GOD's *grace*, and by a steady and resolute resistance of every temptation. And if these endeavours on our own parts are wanting, there can be no hopes of our *prayers* proving effectual. But in a matter of this consequence, I shall not content myself with a *general* recommendati-on of diligence, I will point out to you the *particular means* which to me seem most con-ducive towards the preserving men from the commission of *presumptuous* sins. And

1. First, We should be careful to guard a-gainst the *beginnings* of sin, by not yielding to any one which we know to be such, how

* Col. iv. 12.

SERMON

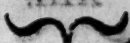
XIII.



small soever it may seem to be, in comparison of others. For if we venture upon what we know to be a sin, we so far do violence to our reason and conscience; we are guilty of some *degree* of *presumption*, and do thereby give a *handle* to *Satan* to redouble his attacks upon us, when he finds he has conquered that *shame* and *fear* which had before restrained us from sinning. And sin is, itself, so full of *enchantment*, that being once admitted, it seldom loseth its hold for some time, but gaining *strength* by every *new* transgression, *multiplies* its power beyond all imagination, and soon gets a *dominion* little less than absolute.

So THAT a *free* indulgence in sins of a *less* criminal kind, will by degrees so *stifle* men's consciences, that they will at last not scruple the doing what they at first could not have once thought of without *detestation* and horror. So that if any one should have told them what cruelty, what oppression, what injustice and what uncleanness they would in time coming be guilty of, they would have been ready to have replied with *Hazael* King of *Syria*, in a like case, *Am I a dog that I should do such things as these* *? Such a *change* in men's minds does an *indulgence* in sin by degrees introduce, and so much reason have all men to check the *beginnings* of it, lest they should be be-

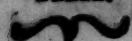
* 2 King. viii. 13. ὅτι ποῦναι τὸ πῶμα τῷ ; Septuag.

trayed into a downright slavery to it, so as SERMON
 even to be hardened through the deceitfulness of XIII.
 it. 

2. Secondly, As sin is to be resisted in the beginning, so will our endeavours for that purpose, be most effectual if we accustom ourselves to a mastery over our wills and humours in matters of an indifferent kind. It is observed by all persons in the education of children, that if they are indulged in every fancy, they grow daily more restive and ungovernable; and from having their wills in little matters at first, they in time grow so wayward and headstrong as to be impatient of contradiction in any thing. And such is the case of every man with regard to the power of governing his own will, and commanding his passions.

If he has been used to indulge his humours in every thing that is lawful, and finds himself unable to controul his desires in any point of pleasure and diversion, which he believes to be innocent, he is in great danger of yielding to sin when it tempts him in any very violent manner, because he has no firmness of spirit to stand the shock; he yields to the temptation, because he has not resolution enough to controul his humour. It is the part therefore of all Christians to strive for the mastery over themselves, that they may be able to thwart their own desires, even in cases where the compliance with them would be perfectly innocent.

They



They must use themselves to some kind of *voluntary discipline*, and bring their wills as well as *their bodies* into subjection, else they will be ever in danger of falling by temptation, and being brought under the *dominion* of sin. I am now

6. SIXTHLY, To enquire what means are left for men's escaping out of their sad state who have unhappily allowed themselves in the commission of *presumptuous* sins till they have got the *dominion* over them. Now although the *state* of those men is to the last degree *dangerous*, yet I think we have no reason to think it absolutely desperate. How *unlikely* soever their return to themselves and a sense of religion is, yet is it not *impossible*. For with **GOD** all things are possible.

THERE is all the encouragement, that could be expected, given in the *holy Scriptures* to repenting sinners, and there is but *one* sin declared to be *unpardonable*, and that seems to be what *they* only could be guilty of, who, seeing our blessed Saviour's miracles, *perversely* ascribed them to the power of the *Devil*; so that how abandoned soever men indeed are, who are under the *dominion* of *presumptuous* sins, yet, as I believe the good *grace* of **GOD** will never be wanting, so a thorough and hearty resolution of complying with *it*, may and will do great things towards rescuing them out of their *slavery*. And examples there are many, both in the *holy Scriptures*, and in most men's

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experience, of great and *abandoned* finners who **SERMON**
have in a most *surprizing* manner broke thro' **XIII.**
all difficulties, and by the powerful *assistance*
of GOD's *grace*, have been enabled with in-
credible resolution, to master as it were at *once*
all the *powers* of *Satan*, and to enter upon,
and persevere in a life of strict duty and obe-
dience.

WHAT men must therefore bring themselves
to, is courageously to resolve to become bet-
ter, and a resolution so made with *truth* and
seriousness, as it is the only means in the fin-
ner's power, so it is what will very proba-
bly be blessed with success. For as GOD
has promised to give his *Holy Spirit* to those
that ask him, so has he also assured us, that *he*
will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the
bruised reed, untill he send forth judgment un-
to victory. And so I have dispatched my *second*
general head. I come now

III. THIRDLY, To shew you that we should
not only pray to be kept back from *presump-*
tuous sins, but for a *power* of attaining to the
highest degree of *Christian perfection*, that we
may be so enabled to govern our *thoughts* and
words that they may be all *acceptable in the*
fight of GOD.

THE *Christian religion* was instituted to
make men as perfect as the condition of their
weak and infirm nature will suffer them to
be. For which reason, all *external* professi-
ons,

The great Danger of

ons, and a *mask* of religion, nay, and a forbearance from *presumptuous* sins also, without a serious heart, and a *uniform* endeavour to please GOD by an *universal obedience*, will avail but little towards the obtaining GOD's favour and acceptance. For although the Gospel of *Christ* admits sinners to pardon upon repentance, yet it gives no *dispensations* to sin under any pretence whatsoever. It is therefore incumbent upon us all, to be watchful over ourselves, and to beg GOD's grace so to enable us to *take heed to our ways that we offend not with our tongues* *, and to be so watchful over our thoughts that they may none of them be *thoughts of iniquity* †.

I. *First*, WE must pray that we may be able to govern our *words*, so that we may not offend by them. Infinite are the ways whereby we may transgress GOD's laws in an undue *liberty* of the tongue. And men may, by *blasphemy*, and *profaneness*, and *perjury*, sin as *presumptuously* and as provokingly as by any other way. So that it is not against these only, and such like *enormous* abuses of speech, that we must guard ourselves, but we must remember that as we are by the *power* of *speech*, as much as by any other thing, distinguished from the *beasts* that perish, so GOD expects we should always use it to his Glory.

* Psal. xxxix. i. † Isaiah lix. 7.

AGREEABLY whereunto he has declared, *that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment* *.

SERMON
XIII.


I must own indeed there is no reason to believe, our *Saviour* in these words intended to declare, that every impertinent, and hasty, and unadvised expression should be called to a strict and severe account; but he hereby certainly declares, that every word that is uttered with any degree of *malice* or purpose of *evil*, shall be examined and condemned in the future judgment. *What manner of persons then ought we to be in all holy conversation?* How reserved and cautious in our *censures* of other people's actions? How *chaste* and modest in all our discourse and conversation? With what *awe* and reverence should we speak of *GOD* and *religion* and the *holy Scriptures*? And how should we dread the *taking his holy name in vain*?

AND yet how common are offences of this kind? And how few are there who act as if they looked upon these as *real* offences? But let us not deceive ourselves. These things are by no means consistent with the *Gospel-perfection*. We must therefore guard ourselves against them, and the more *difficulty* we find in keeping ourselves entirely clear of them, the more assiduous let us be in our addresses to heaven for power to overcome the *sins* that do so easily beset us.

* Matth. xii. 36.

2. Socondly,

SERMON
XIII.

2. *Secondly*, AND to conclude, we must take care to regulate not only our *words*, but our *thoughts* also, that they may be acceptable in the sight of GOD. It was a notion among the *Jews*, that nothing but *idolatry* was criminal in the sight of GOD, if it was *intended* only and not *executed*. But our *Saviour* condemns this notion by declaring that *evil thoughts* *defile the man* *, and by shewing that the design of the *seventh* and *tenth* commandment was to check all *impure* desires, and restrain the most *secret affections* of the heart, and that a man may be as guilty before GOD by the *licentiousness* of his *thoughts*, as by his *outward actions*. It is the duty therefore of all *Christians*, to have a strict guard upon their thoughts, that they may not be what the *wise man* calls *the thoughts of foolishness* †. And they must be careful that their minds do not take delight in any sinful desires, much less *form* any settled *deliberate* designs of doing wickedly. Nay, it will not suffice that the thoughts of their hearts are not offensive to GOD. It was part of the *Psalmist's* prayer that they might be *acceptable* unto him; and so it must be of ours also; That GOD would be pleased so to assist us with his *grace*, that our minds may be always in a fit and due composure, filled with an awful sense of GOD's infinite knowledge, and affected duly with the consideration of our being

* Matth. v. 28. † Prov. xxiv. 9.

always in his *presence*, and of all things being open and naked before him. SERMON
XIII.

THAT we may thence be not only withheld from all *sinful thoughts* and designs, but from all *vain* and unprofitable ones also; and that we may be induced to store our minds with holy and *religious* considerations. And to that end, when we are not employ'd upon the necessary occasions of life, we should entertain ourselves with the thoughts of GOD's *gracious* purposes for the good and happiness of mankind; with reflections upon the *unchangeable* state, to which we are all hastening, the *uncertainty* of our time here, and the endless misery to which we must be liable, if we are not admitted to be partakers of that *glory* that shall be revealed; with a due consideration of the *value* of our souls, and of the *worthlessness* of the whole world in comparison of them, with *meditations* upon all the glorious perfections of the *Divine Nature*, according as we find them declared and explained to us in the *holy Scriptures*; that having GOD always in our thoughts, and the *fear* of him always before our eyes, not our words and actions only, but our very *thoughts* also may all of them be *acceptable* in his sight. Which GOD of his infinite mercy grant for his Son JESUS CHRIST's sake our LORD. To whom with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST be ascribed all honour, &c. *Amen.*

E R R A T A.

- Page 127. *in the middle, after the Break, to the beginning of the next Paragraph prefix III. THIRDLY.*
 Page 135. *in quotation from Lucret. for vero read veræ.*
 Page 139. *in the middle, for IDEED r. INDEED.*
 Page 142. *in 8. l. from bottom, after due add and.*
 Page 152. *at bottom, for τὸ τέρας r. τὸ πῆμα.*
 Page 163. *last l. save one, for same r. other.*
 Ibid. *last l. for account r. hand.*
 Page 164. *at bottom, for 2 Tit. r. 2 Tim.*
 Page 165. *l. 12. r. whilst.*
 Page 166. *l. 25. r. tolerable.*
 Page 169. *l. 17. r. 1 Cor. x. 12.*
 Page 187. *l. 7. from the bottom, for upon passions r. upon their passions.*
 Page 189. *l. 8. from the bottom, for disorders r. disorder.*
 Page 198. *l. 10. r. foretold.*
 Page 199. *l. 10. dele here.*
 Page 205. *l. 15. after this put ?*
 Page 200. *l. 26. for do r. to.*
 Page 212. *at the top, for BSIDES r. BESIDES.*
 Page 213. *l. 7. for days r. time.*
 Page 223. *l. 2. dele too.*
 Page 224. *l. 23. r. χερσότης*
 Page 227. *l. 30. r. profess.*
 Page 235. *bottom l. save one, r. 1 Cor. ix. 22.*
 Page 246. *l. 10. for custom r. fancy.*
 Page 256. *at the beginning of l. 5. add in.*
 Page 300. *l. 23. at the beginning after and add is raised.*
 Page 314. *at the bottom, for ῥόμα r. ῥῆμα.*

The first thing I noticed when I stepped
 out of the car was the cold. It was a
 sharp contrast to the warm blanket I
 had been wrapped in. I shivered as I
 walked towards the entrance of the
 building. The air was thick with the
 scent of old wood and the faint
 aroma of coffee. I took a deep breath,
 savoring the familiar scents that
 reminded me of home. The door was
 slightly ajar, and I pushed it open
 with a creak. Inside, the room was
 dimly lit, with the soft glow of a
 lamp casting a warm light on the
 floor. I walked towards the sound
 of the lamp, my feet silent on the
 carpet. The room was empty except
 for the lamp and a small table with
 a few books. I sat down on the
 table, my back to the lamp, and
 closed my eyes. The world outside
 faded away, and I was left with
 the quiet hum of the lamp and the
 gentle rustle of the pages.